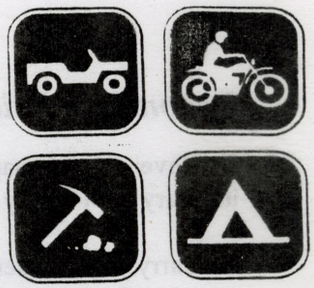
INYO MTNS.

References

INYO NATIONAL FOREST MAP
EUREKA-SALINE MAP
INYO-MONO JEEP TRAILS Pg. 19
INYO-MONO SUV TRAILS Ch. 5

INYO MOUNTAINS

INYO National Forest



The Inyo mountains, a multi-hued, 6,000 foot wall of steep canyons and sharp ridges overlooking the Central Owens Valley, contains many special places for those properly prepared and appropriately equipped. A surprisingly extensive road system, most of which was once no more than a series of rough trails pioneered by hopeful miners, makes many parts of the Inyo's available to explore, appreciate, and enjoy. Only lightly visited when compared to the Sierra Nevada a few miles to the west, this desert range offers a decidedly different, but nonetheless rich and varied, recreation experience.

Semi-primitive motorized areas combine solitude with self-reliance, challenge and risk in a predominately natural environment. Few on site controls or restrictions are apparent. ***Motorized use is permitted on open routes only. Driving off road is prohibited.*** Visitors are encouraged to park no more than 15 feet off-road to help limit vehicle impacts. The recently designated Inyo Mountains Wilderness required closure of some four-wheel drive(4WD) routes. Visitors have a responsibility to be aware of where wilderness starts and stops as far as vehicle entry is involved. Closures are signed and regularly monitored for compliance. Recreation opportunities include camping, recreational driving, backpacking, day hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, rock hounding, photography and viewing scenery. The Inyo Mountains contain important wildlife habitat, rich and varied plant communities, and historical and cultural resources.

Mining

Evidence of past and present mining activities is abundant in the Inyo's. Permission may be required to enter signed property. ***Old mine workings can be extremely hazardous and exploring abandoned tunnels or shafts is strongly discouraged.*** Stay away from vertical shaft openings. Don't throw rocks or other materials into them!

Roads

The Interagency Visitor Center at the junction of Highways 395 and 136 has maps showing most roads and trails. The Inyo National Forest map shows primary vehicle routes. Some junctions may be signed, some routes may have road numbers to aid travel- but don't count on it. Many routes are steep and narrow. Pull outs and turn around areas may not be present. Know your vehicle limitations. When in doubt, walk the area ahead before driving it.

Mazourka Canyon Road is a popular entry point. This road leaves Highway 395 from the south end of Independence and is paved for a few miles before it becomes dirt. High clearance (pick-up trucks) or 4WD vehicles are recommended for travel to Santa Rita and Badger Flats. Some spur roads within these areas require 4WD vehicles. Fine views of the Owens Valley and the Eastern Sierra are available from these locations. Travel north, beyond Badger Flat, requires 4WD. Papoose, Squaw and Harkless Flats can be reached from Badger Flat or from Saline Valley Road, east of Big Pine. Established campsites are scattered throughout all areas except Papoose Flat. High clearance, 4WD vehicles are recommended for these areas. Keep in mind many spur roads not shown on maps are open and available to explore along the main route system.

OHV Use

Off-highway vehicle use is permitted on routes not signed or barricaded closed. Unlicensed motorcycles must have a California Green sticker and approved spark arrester. Green stickers are required for All Terrain vehicles. ATV riders are required to wear a helmet. Passengers are prohibited. Please be familiar with the regulations covering OHV's. You'll have a safer and more enjoyable experience.

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Inyo National Forest

Recommendations

* Have a good map and know how to read it. File an itinerary with family or friends, travel in two's.

* Carry extra water (5 gallons or more recommended) and gasoline. Remember, no water is available in most areas. Have food, warm clothing, a tool kit and shovel. Basic first aid supplies are desirable.

* Carefully check vehicle - fluid levels, tire pressure and condition, belts, hoses, etc. Avoiding mechanical failure is important.

* Hikers should carry at least one gallon of water for each day out. Water sources are few. If you locate water, filter or boil before drinking. Camp well away from springs, wildlife depend on these for survival.

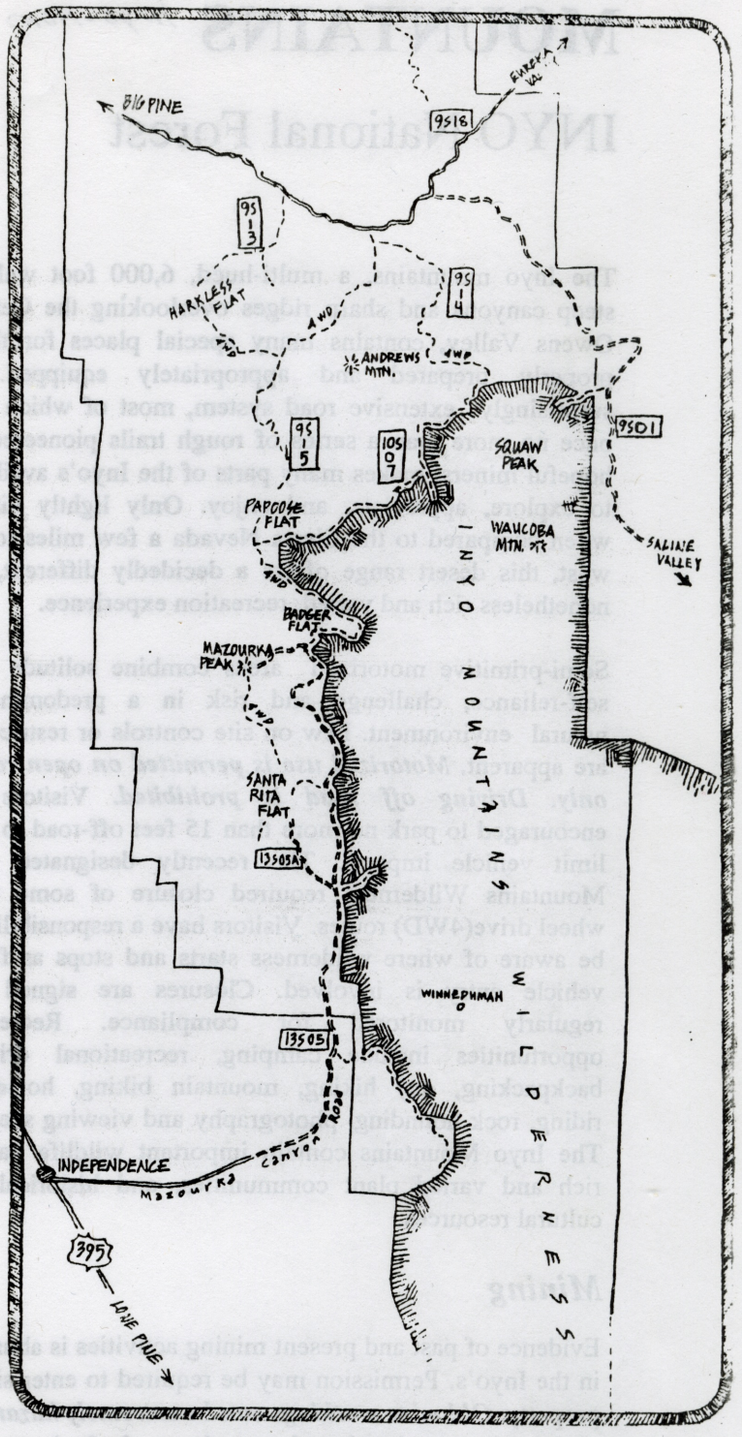
* Pack out trash and garbage, including food items. Cans, bottles, foil and plastic don't burn. Always try to leave the area in better condition than you found it.

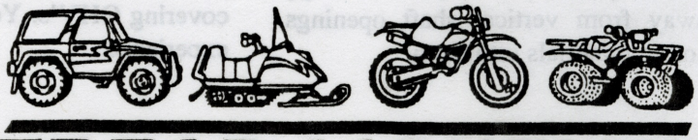
* Sanitation: Use the "cathole" method of burying human waste. Dig a hole 8 to 10 inches deep at least 100 feet from water sources, campsites and roads. Consider packing out toilet paper in an airtight container.

Please!

Help protect and preserve natural, historical, and scenic values found in the Inyo Mountains and wherever else you may venture. Leave Native American or mining artifacts as you found them. Use existing firerings when present, and water, not dirt, to extinguish campfires whenever possible. ***Tread Lightly!*** Minimize the impacts of your visit.

For more information contact:
Mt. Whitney Ranger Station
640 South Main Street
P. O. Box 8
Lone Pine, CA 93545 (760) 876-6200





TREAD LIGHTLY!
ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND

ROUTE 8 MAZOURKA CANYON

THIS HIDDEN CANYON IS YOUR ENTRYWAY INTO THE WILD INYO MOUNTAINS. CLIMBING AMID OLD MINES, CACTUS SPINES AND PINYON PINES, THE ROAD FORMS THE BORDER OF A LITTLE-VISITED WILDERNESS AND BRINGS YOU WITHIN HIKING DISTANCE OF 9,941-FOOT MAZOURKA PEAK.

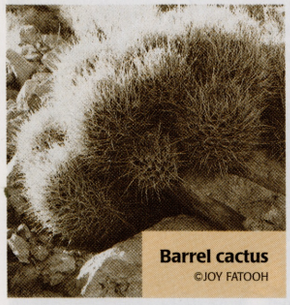
What to expect: The first 5 miles are paved; the rest is rough and rocky but well-maintained graded dirt. Snow is not cleared in winter and can remain quite deep in the topmost stretch, which is shaded by steep walls and climbs to over 8,000 feet. Also avoid this route if thunder clouds are forming: flash floods are a definite danger here.

Length: 20 miles, one way.

Driving time: about 2 hours, one way.

Getting there: In Independence the route begins at the traffic light in the center of town.

Along the route: Independence was called Little Pine after the nearby creek before adopting its name from the military post two miles to the north. Go south 0.4 miles to the edge of town and turn onto Mazourka Canyon Road on your left (east, toward the Inyo Mountains). Look up to the low point on the crest of the Inyos to see Winnedumah Paiute Monument, a slender 80-foot granite spire that shines silver in the sun. Paiute legend says Winnedumah was turned to stone by an enemy arrow that flew from the Sierra to the Inyo crest, and now forever watches over his people.



Barrel cactus
©JOY FATOOH

At about 3.5 miles the road drops several feet. This is the fault scarp formed in a huge earthquake on the morning of March 26, 1872. The quake was centered in Lone Pine and would have registered an estimated 8.3 on today's Richter scale. Here the ground shows some 15 to 20 feet of both lateral and vertical displacement, and a north-south row of trees where groundwater was released along the fault.

As you cross the Owens River you'll enter Bend City. Don't see it? In the early 1860s Bend City and its rival, San Carlos three miles to the north, were the centers of prosperous mining districts. In 1864 Bend City boasted 60 houses, five mercantile stores, two hotels with dining rooms, two blacksmiths, a shoe shop, tailor shop and laundry.

Three years later the adobe buildings were gone. Kearsarge Station is also gone, although you may be able to find traces of the buildings and railroad bed. This was the local station on the Carson & Colorado narrow-gauge line.

As pavement ends the route continues east, then curves northward alongside the mountains. Layers of folded metamorphic rock are reminders of the seismic forces that shaped the nation's deepest valley. Soon the road begins ascending the canyon, narrowing as it climbs. The tall, rangy shrubs are creosote bush, an incredibly durable desert plant that forms clones in an expanding ring. Creosote rings have been dated at over 11,000 years, much older than the oldest living trees, the bristlecone pines at the crest of the Inyos (Route 11). Also look for barrel cactus, whose dense spines provide the plant with cooling shade along with the more obvious forms of protection.

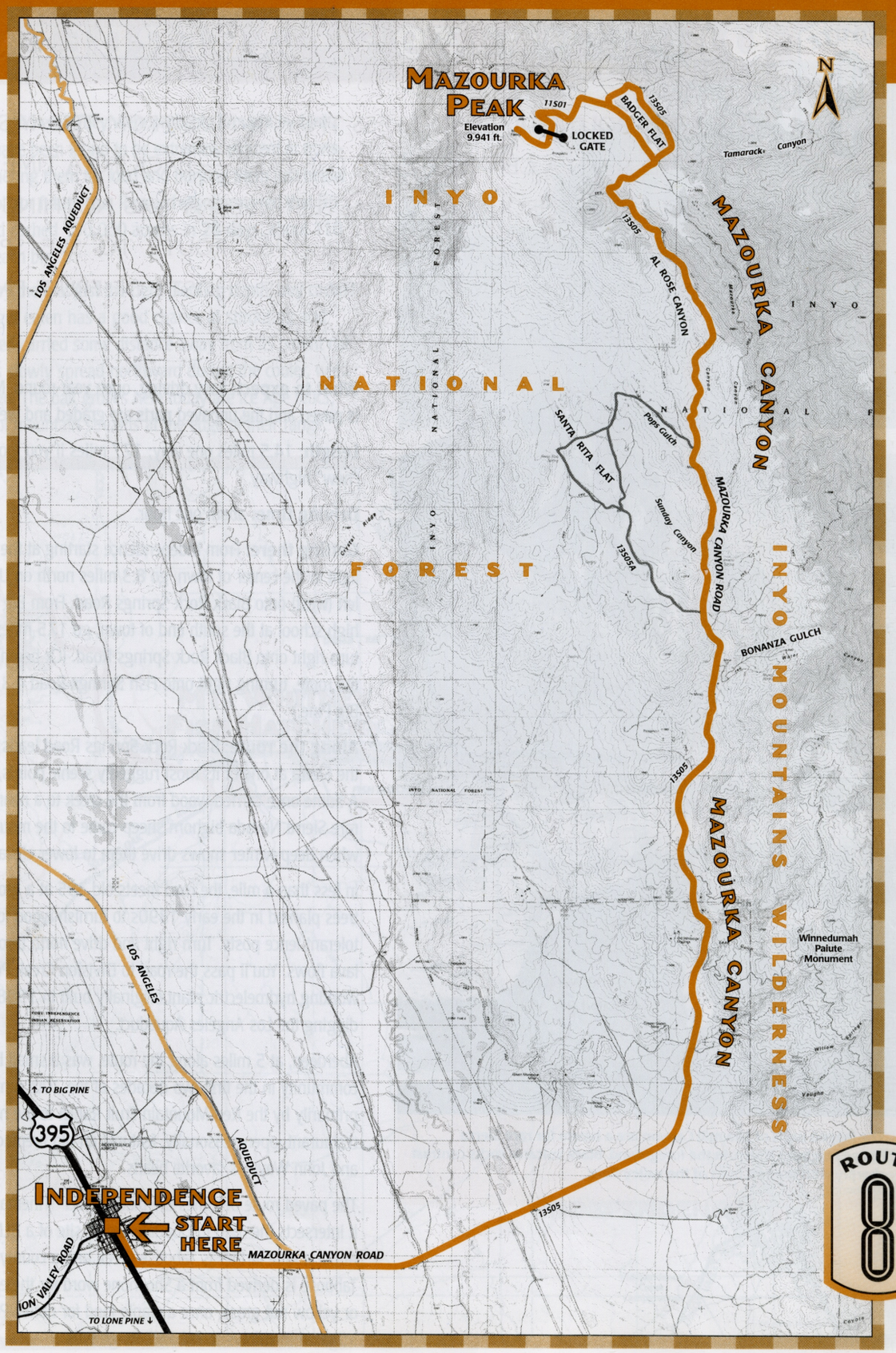
Pinyon pines and juniper trees thrive in the higher, cooler, moister parts of the canyon. Pinyons bear delicious nuts, but not every year; for thousands of years people have traveled many miles every autumn in search of the best crops. So have pinyon jays, flying from mountain to mountain in gregarious flocks, caching nuts in the soil and inadvertently planting the next generation of pines.

Both lode and placer mining claims have been worked in Mazourka Canyon for over 100 years. Tunnels and shafts, many quite dangerous and unguarded, are found throughout the canyon. Bonanza Gulch, a side canyon to the south about 13 miles along the route, and Santa Rita Flat to the north, boomed after a cloudburst in 1894: torrents of water uncovered gold ranging in size from ten-cent to ten-dollar nuggets. There is a signed turn-off for a side road to Santa Rita Flat. If there is snow on the road, we recommend that within the next 3 miles you turn around while you are still able!

Arriving at Badger Flat, bear left at the fork in the road at 18.5 miles and again at 18.8 onto road 11SO1. At 19.9 you'll arrive at a high saddle with a fine view of the Sierra. From here retrace your path back onto road 13SO5. To add a short but adventuresome loop, at 21.1 miles take the middle fork and go south—not uphill to the left, nor back the way you came to the right. At 21.3 bear right at the fork, and again at 21.4 where the view extends far down over Owens Dry Lake and across the valley to the Alabama Hills. Mile 21.8 brings you back to the main road.

Pinyon pine
COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Mazourka Canyon
©JOY FATOOH



ROUTE 8

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
RIDGECREST FIELD OFFICE
INYO MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS

AREA DESCRIPTION: This wilderness area encompasses a large portion of the Inyo Mountains, which rises to 11,000 feet at Keynot Peak and separates the Owens Valley on the west and Saline Valley on the east. Because of the sheer ruggedness of the terrain, these mountains have maintained most of their pristine character and beauty. The vegetation includes creosote, shadscale scrub, big sagebrush and lush riparian areas in most of the canyons on the eastern slope. Pinyon-juniper woodland, bristlecone and limber pine are found at the higher elevations. Wildlife in the area includes desert bighorn sheep and Inyo Mountain salamander.

A 4-wheel drive vehicle and advance driving and survival skills are suggested for this rugged area.

WHAT TO DO: Hunting, hiking, photography, and backpacking are a few of the recreational opportunities visitors can enjoy.

GETTING THERE: Located in Inyo County 5 miles east of Lone Pine, California, access to the southern boundary is by way of San Lucas Canyon or Cerro Gordo Road. The west and northern reaches can be reaches via the Lone Pine-Owenyo and Mazourka Canyon roads. The east access is via Saline Valley Road.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: The Inyo Mountains Wilderness Area is jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Inyo National Forest. Death Valley National Park is the east boundary of this wilderness.

The Malpais Mesa Wilderness is along the eastern boundary of the Inyo Wilderness area.

There are numerous canyons that are popular for hiking and backpacking-some are: Beveridge, Keynot, and Hunter Canyons.

Signs indicating "Wilderness" and "Closed Road" or "Closed Route" are placed at various intervals. Vehicles can be parked outside the wilderness boundary; however, the boundary is set back 30 feet from unmaintained dirt roads and 300 feet on paved roads.

Mechanized or motorized vehicles are NOT PERMITTED in a wilderness.

Hunting, fishing, and non-commercial trapping are allowed under state and local laws.

Pets are allowed, but please keep your pets under control at all times.

Horses are permitted, however you may be required to carry feed.

Private lands may be located within the wilderness, PLEASE respect the owner. DO NOT use these lands without permission.

Removal, disturbance, or attempting to remove archaeological materials is a felony. Selling, receiving, purchasing, transporting, exchanging or offering to do so is prohibited by law.

CAMPING: Camping is permitted, limited to 14 days. After 14 days, campers must relocate at least 25 miles from previous site.

Help BLM preserve California's fragile deserts. Please park your vehicle or set up camp in previously disturbed sites.

Gathering wood for campfires, when permitted, is limited to dead and down materials. Live vegetation can not be cut.

The BLM encourages all desert recreationists and travelers exploring public lands, not only within southern California but throughout the west, to use propylene glycol based antifreeze/coolant in their touring and recreation vehicles. Proven safer, it will have minimal impacts on both the wildlife and the environment should a leak occur.

Practice *Leave No Trace* principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces
- Pack It In. Pack It Out
- Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Use and Impact of Fires.

MAP INFORMATION: The USGS 7.5 quadrangle maps that may be useful are: Bee Springs, Cerro Gordo Peak, Craig Canyon, Dolomite, Mazourka Peak, Nelson Range, New York Butte, Pat Keyes Canyon, Union Wash, Waucoba Canyon, Waucoba Spring and Waucoba Mountain.

For information and/or brochures on other recreational opportunities contact:

Bureau of Land Management
Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S. Richmond Road
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
Telephone: 760-384-5400

Or visit our Outdoor Recreation website at:
http://www.ca.blm.gov/ridgecrest/recreation.html

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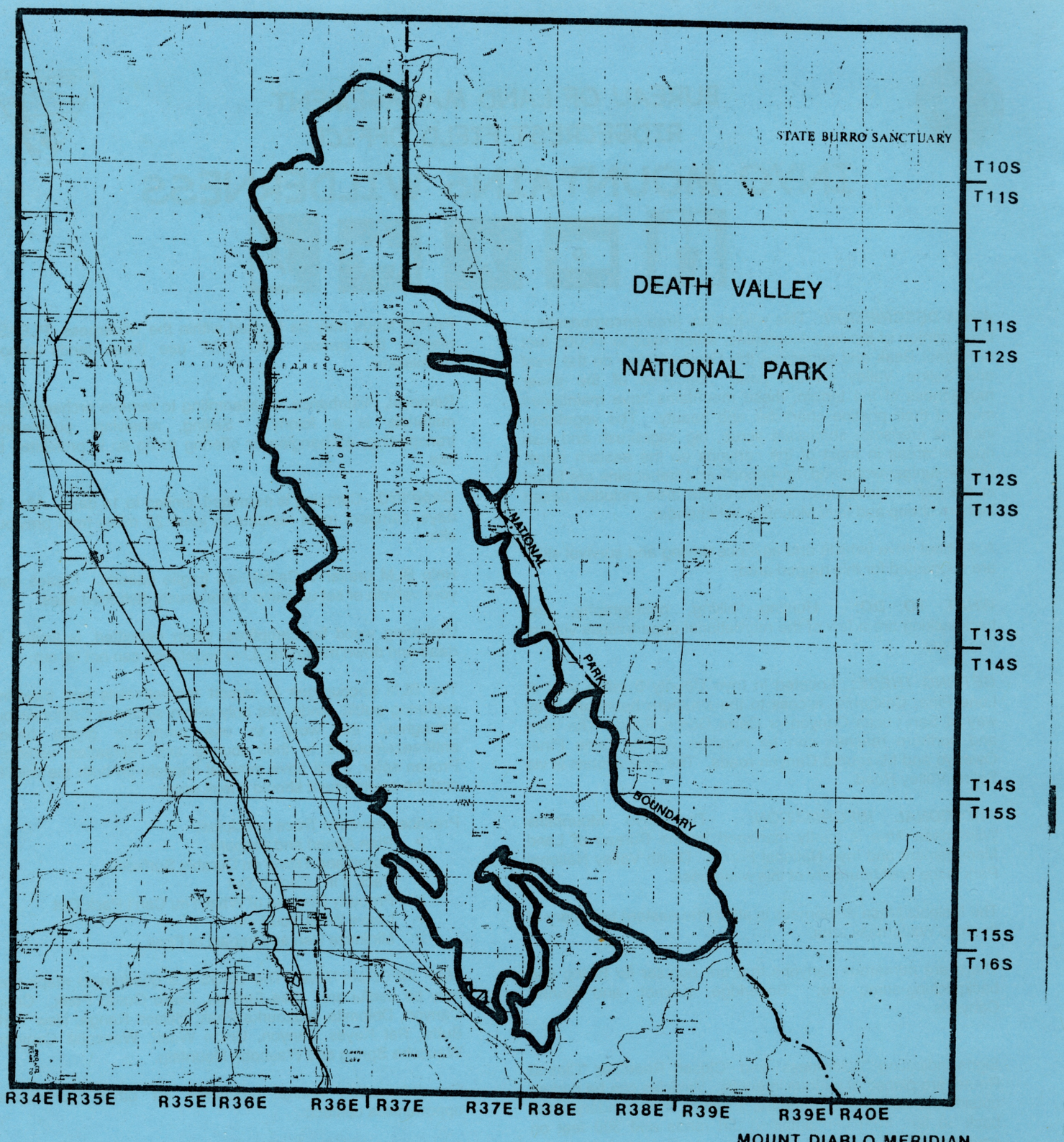

INYO MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS AREA

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
RIDGECREST FIELD OFFICE

BEVERIDGE CANYON TRAIL INFORMATION
INYO MOUNTAIANS WILDERNESS

People venturing into the Inyo Mountains Wilderness should proceed cautiously and not overextend their supplies or capabilities. Day hikers and backpackers must carefully adhere to all wildland backcountry safety measures and initially explore short distances until they become personally familiar with trail alignments and water sources before getting into the more isolated portions of the wilderness. Most of these trails have not been maintained or signed and are not easy to use or follow. On some segments, it is necessary to push through dense brush or cross steep slopes covered with loose rock. **Anyone considering using these trails must approach it as a rugged backcountry exploration with steep elevation gains and losses where no other people will be encountered and no assistance is readily available.**

Beveridge Canyon in the Inyo Mountains Wilderness is the site of the historic Beveridge Mining District. From the 1860's through the 1930's, mining occurred in this isolated canyon on the east side of the Inyo Mountain Range. The canyon is very inaccessible and in a very isolated and remote area of the Mojave desert.

Most of the historic mining activity in the Beveridge Mining District occurred along a 2 mile linear segment of Beveridge Canyon from an elevation of 6,000 feet down to 4,500 feet. Today, there are the remains of various small pieces of mining equipment, several small mining operations, and the partial remains of several small habitation rock structures along the 2 miles of canyon bottom. There is a fairly intact historic cabin (Frenchy's Cabin) and spring at 6,100 feet, and a fairly well defined trail which extends down to the canyon bottom to a millsite at 5,100 feet.

At 5,400 feet, a small stream begins and flows all the way down to the mouth of Beveridge Canyon at 1,800 feet in Saline Valley. At 5,100 feet, there are the remains of a 5-stamp mill, partial remains of several small cabins, and a 25 mile long aerial tram. Below this, the canyon brush is extremely thick and impenetrable to all but the most tenacious explorers down to 2,800 feet. There is another small cabin, aerial tram and other mining structures at 4,500 feet, but this is extremely difficult to reach because of the thick brush below 5,100 feet. There are also three high waterfalls in the lower canyon between 4,100 feet and 2,200 feet, which require ropes to negotiate when traversing the lower portion of the canyon bottom.

There are four historic mining trails which can be used to access Beveridge Canyon from five different directions. These are the Burgess Mine Trail, Snowflake Mine Trail, French Spring Trail and the Lonesome Miner Trail from either the north or south. These trails are generally hard to follow and along some stretches are completely slid out or overgrown.

The existence of most of these trails was unknown to hikers until an avid hiker contacted the Ridgecrest BLM office in 1989 offering to initiate work to explore the Inyos and stabilize historic cabins. A volunteer group was formed with the BLM called "Friends of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness". The volunteers of this group completed their first project in 1989 by stabilizing the Beveridge Ridge cabin and descending Beveridge Canyon down to Saline Valley. Since 1989, the "Friends of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness" have completed over 45 projects to obtain wilderness information, monitor wilderness values, stabilize cabins, inventory the historic trails and done some minor trail maintenance and signing work in the 205,000 acre Inyo Mountains Wilderness. While volunteers have done some limited maintenance work and signing, it will be necessary to complete a wilderness management plan to determine which, if any, trails should be adequately signed for first time visitors and brought up to better standards.

A total of 16 Inyo trails covering approximately 123 miles have been inventoried and mapped. These trails are generally built with grades not exceeding 15 degrees – probably the maximum grade for burros to use when heavily loaded with mining equipment – and thus ideal for backpackers with heavy loads.

The following is information regarding the four trails which provide access to Beveridge Canyon. The following 7.5" topographic maps are needed when using these trails: New York Butte, Craig Canyon and Union Wash.

BURGESS MINE TRAIL: This 7 mile long trail starts at 9,700 feet on the Inyo Crest. The first 3 miles of the trail are shown on the New York Butte, map extending north from the Burgess Mine and ending a short distance beyond Goat Springs. The trail continues on by following the canyon bottom down this drainage and reaches Frenchy's Cabin at 6,200 feet in the bottom of Beveridge Canyon.

FRENCH SPRING TRAIL: This 8 mile long trail starts at 4,600 feet at the end of the French Spring Road in Owens Valley. The first 4 miles are shown on the New York Butte map and ending at 9,600 feet elevation at Forgotten Pass. From the pass, the trail continues eastward down the canyon bottom to reach Frenchy's Cabin at 6,200 feet.

LONESOME MINER TRAIL: The Lonesome Miner Trail is at the heart of the Inyo Mountains historic trail system and connects many of the Inyo Mountains historic trails and canyons. It is a continual trail which traverses north to south through the recently designated Inyo Mountains Wilderness. The trail extends from a trailhead at 4,900 feet near Reward in the Owens Valley south for 40 miles to its southern terminus trailhead at 1,800 feet at Hunter Canyon in Saline Valley. The central portion of the trail provides access to Beveridge Canyon from the south and north.

The Lonesome Miner Trail descends into Beveridge Canyon on the south from the Hunter ridgeline at 8,600 feet and leads to Frenchy's Cabin. From Frenchy's Cabin, the trail descends to the bottom of Beveridge Canyon for a mile to the millsite at 5,100 feet. At the millsite, the trail turns northward and ascends a ridge to the Beveridge Ridge Cabin at 8,200 feet.

SNOWFLAKE MINE TRAIL: The 7 mile Snowflake Trail is one of best known and most used trails in the Inyo Mountains. The trail starts from a trailhead near the end of Snowflake Talc Mine at 3,300 feet, climbs up the Beveridge Ridge to 6,700 feet and then drops down to the Beveridge millsite at 5,100 feet. The first 5 miles of this trail is shown on the New York Butte 7.5" topographic map. The trailhead is reached by driving a steep 4x4 road for 2.5 miles up towards the Snowflake mine. The trail begins about ¼ of a mile before the road ends at the mine. This road is frequently washed out which required starting from the bottom of the Beveridge ridgeline in Saline Valley at 1,800 feet and walking up the road to reach the trailhead.

From the road at 3,300 feet, the trail heads directly west and switchbacks directly up the Beveridge ridge to a broad lateral shoulder at 5,000 feet. On the prominent ridgeline shoulder are some old mining prospects. The trail continues to climb steeply to 6,700 feet with great views of Keynot Canyon to the north and Bevridge Canyon to the south. At about the 6,700 feet level, the trail traverses westward around the south side of Beveridge ridge. After about 2 miles, the trail switchbacks directly down to the Beveridge millsite at 5,100 feet where it intersects the Lonesome Miner Trail. At this point is the lower terminus of a ¼ mile long tramline, 5-stamp millsite, and remains of numerous historic features --- many covered by brush in the canyon bottom. Down the canyon about ¼ mile is a sheet metal cabin, aerial tram and more historic features. The trip down canyon is extremely difficult due to the dense and thorny brush.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: To get to this area, you will be traveling over public lands, and the BLM encourages all recreationists and travelers, not only within southern California, but throughout the west, to use a propylene glycol based antifreeze/coolant in their touring and recreation vehicles. Proven safer, it will have minimal impacts on both the wildlife and the environment should a leak occur. Please help BLM protect our desert wildlife and their fragile desert environment.

During established hunting seasons, the BLM is encouraging all hunters and recreational shooters to use lead free non-toxic shot and bullets. Proven safer, non-toxic shot significantly reduces the risks of accidental lead poisoning of wildlife and will have minimal impacts on the environment.

And, please park your vehicles or set-up camp in previously disturbed sites.

For more information, contact:
Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S. Richmond Rd.
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
Telephone: 760-384-5400

Or our website at: http://www.ca.blm.gov/ridgecrest

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
RIDGECREST FIELD OFFICE

LONESOME MINER TRAIL – INYO MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS
INFORMATION and BACKGROUND

People venturing into the Inyo Mountains Wilderness should proceed cautiously and not overextend their supplies or capabilities. Backpackers must carefully adhere to all wildland backcountry safety measures and initially explore short distances until they become personally familiar with trail alignments and water sources before getting into the more isolated portions of this wilderness. Most of the Lonesome Miner Trail has not been maintained or signed and is not easy to use or follow. On some segments, it is necessary to push through dense brush or cross steep slopes covered with loose rock. Anyone considering using this trail must approach it as a rugged backcountry exploration where no other people will be encountered and no assistance is readily available.

The Lonesome Miner Trail is a historic mining trail which is approximately 40 miles long. This trail is an amazing historic legacy left by small groups of miners who built trails in the Inyo Mountains starting in the 1860's and continued intermittently through the depression of the 1930's. The Lonesome Miner trail is a series of interconnected trails, which were built at different times by miners to access different mining and mill sites. There had been no maintenance of this trail since miners abandoned it in 1941.

The existence of most of this trail was unknown to hikers until an avid hiker contacted the BLM in 1989 offering to initiate work to explore the Inyos and stabilize historic cabins. As a result, a volunteer group known as the "Friends of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness" was formed. The volunteers of this group completed their first project in 1989 by stabilizing the Beveridge Ridge cabin and descending Beveridge Canyon down to Saline Valley. Since 1989, the "Friends of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness" have completed over 45 projects which consist of wilderness information, monitoring wilderness values, stabilize cabins, inventory the historic trails, minor trail maintenance and signing work in the 205,000 acre Inyo Mountains Wilderness. So far a total of 16 Inyo trails covering 123 miles have been inventoried and mapped.

These trails are generally hard to follow and along some stretches are completely slid out or overgrown. While the volunteers have done some limited maintenance work and signing, it will be necessary to complete a wilderness management plan to determine which, if any, trails should be adequately signed for first time visitors and brought up to better standards.

In December 1993, volunteers completed locating the elusive final 3 mile segment of the Lonesome Miner Trail between the bottom of McElvoy Canyon and the Keynot Ridge. At that time, it was given the Lonesome Miner name by a BLM Volunteer. The Lonesome Miner Trail that this volunteer helped discover and name is now a part of the lasting Inyo Mountains legacy of cross country exploration and historic research writings, which the volunteer completed during 4 years as a volunteer. The Lonesome Miner Trail is at the heart of the Inyo Mountains historic trail system and connects many of the historic trails and canyons. It is a continual trail, which traverses north to south through the recently designated Inyo Mountains Wilderness in the northern California Desert. The trail extends from a trailhead at the 4,900 feet elevation near Reward in Owens Valley south for 40 miles to its southern terminus trailhead at the elevation of 1,800 feet at Hunter Canyon in the Saline Valley. Only two short segments of this trail are shown on the current 7.5" topographic maps. The first 6 miles of the trail on the north end is shown on the Bee Springs and the Pat Keyes Canyon maps (labeled as the Pat Keyes Trail) extending eastward from Reward, crossing the Inyo Crest at Pat Keyes Pass and ending at the 8,500 feet elevation on the east side of the Inyo Crest.

The first 7 miles of trail on the south end is shown on the Craig Canyon and New York Butte maps starting at the mouth of Hunter Canyon at an elevation of 1,800 feet, and extending first west and then north past Bighorn Spring to the Bighorn Mine at an elevation of 7,100 feet. The intervening 27 miles of trail is not shown on the maps. Portions of the trail are truly inspiring with panoramic views overlooking the Saline Valley, the rugged Inyo Crestline, and the deep intervening canyons which the trail crosses.

Not much is known about the construction of these trails by miners and their periods of use. From copies of historic newspaper articles of the 1870's through the 1930's, we know that miners built the trails to access mines and millsites. The trails are generally built with grades not exceeding 15 degrees – probably the maximum grade for burros to use when heavily loaded with mining equipment – thus ideal for backpackers with heavy loads. The Lonesome Miner Trail is VERY STRENUOUS AND ALONG SOME SECTIONS IS VERY HARD TO FOLLOW DUE TO BRUSH, ROCKSLIDES AND LACK OF MAINTENANCE. It

is initially necessary to do a steep ascent out of either Owens Valley or Saline Valley, and then descend and ascend each of the following east side Inyo Canyons: Pat Keyes, McElvoy, Keynot, Beveridge and Hunter. Traveling from south to north requires over 17,000 feet of elevation gain, while over 21,000 feet is gained in the reverse direction over the length of the trail. Most water sources are located where the trail crosses the canyon bottoms. Reliable water sources along the trail, from south to north, are at: Bighorn Spring, Frenchy's Cabin, Beveridge Canyon, Keynot Well (½ mile up Keynot Canyon off the trail is sometimes dry), McElvoy Canyon, Pat Keyes Canyon, and a small spring on the west side of Pat Keyes Pass at 7,700 feet. When using this trail, the following 7.5" topographic maps are needed: Bee Springs, New York Butte, Craig Canyon, and Pat Keyes Canyon.

BLM through its volunteers is also maintaining three primitive historic cabins along the Lonesome Miner Trail. Frenchy's Cabin is at 6,200 feet in upper Beveridge Canyon. Bighorn Cabin is at 7,200 feet at the Bighorn Mine in Hunter Canyon and Beveridge Ridge Cabin is at 8,400 feet on the Beveridge ridge. The location of the Beveridge Cabin is shown by a small square on the New York Butte 7.5" map.

Trail Log from Hunter Canyon Trailhead: The trail starts from the end of the Hunter Canyon Road at 1,800 feet in Saline Valley where numerous millsite equipment remains are located. Start by going south from the end of the road and crossing through 200 feet of riparian vegetation. From the south side of the canyon, follow the trail up the canyon bottom for about .5 mile. The trail leaves the canyon bottom by climbing steeply 300 feet to the top of the canyon's south side. From here, the trail climbs steeply and at 3,700 feet passes a ledge where three tent platforms are located. These tent platforms provide an excellent camping site.

The trail continues climbing steeply from the tent platforms to 6,700 feet where it crosses over a shoulder off the Craig Ridge. The trail drops steeply to Bighorn Spring at 5,100 feet in Hunter Canyon where there is a good source of water. From the Bighorn Spring, the trail first climbs northward along a canyon bottom, and then climbs a ridgeline to reach the Bighorn Mine and Bighorn Cabin at 7,200 feet. From the cabin the trail climbs steeply to cross the Hunter ridgeline at 8,700 feet. The trail then descends steeply to Frenchy's Cabin at 6,200 feet in the bottom of Beveridge Canyon where there is a good source of water. From Frenchy's Cabin the trail goes down the bottom of Beveridge Canyon for 1 mile and at 5,100 feet ascends a ridge to Beveridge Ridge Cabin at 8,200 feet. Keynot Well is the only known water source in the area of the cabin and it is sometimes dry. Cove Spring is a reliable source of water but it requires a descent of 1,200 feet from the cabin on the Cove Spring Trail.

From the Beveridge Cabin the trail traverses northward to Keynot Canyon and the Keynot Mine. Where the trail crosses the bottom of Keynot Canyon is the point to reach the Keynot Well by going ½ mile up canyon. Down canyon from the Keynot Mine, there are some small intermittent water flows and 10 waterfalls, which require ropes to traverse. Starting form the bottom of the Keynot Mine tailings at 8,000 feet near the abandoned Allis-Chamber bulldozer, follow the trail upward pass the mine to the top of the tailing at 8,700 feet. At this point from the uppermost mine diggings, the Lonesome Miner Trail contours eastward for 3 miles to reach the top of the Keynot Ridge at 8,000 feet. The trail heads northward and climbs to almost 9,000 feet as it traverses for 2 miles around the side of the Inyos before dropping steeply down to the bottom of McElvoy Canyon at 5,300 feet. There is a continual flow of water in the canyon bottom from this point down to Saline Valley. The trail then goes down canyon through dense brush for ½ mile to reach the McElvoy millsite at 5,200 feet. Below this, in the lower canyon there are eight major waterfalls, which require ropes to traverse.

From the McElvoy millsite, the trail ascends north to the McElvoy Ridge at 8,200 feet and then follows along the beautiful forested McElvoy ridgeline for a mile westward towards Mt. Inyo. This flat-topped ridgeline is a great camping site. On the west side of the flat at 8,300 feet, the trail leaves the ridge and traverses northward around the northeast flank of Mt. Inyo for 2 miles. It then drops down to the Pat Keyes millsite at 7,800 feet where there is reliable water. Down canyon from this point, there is a continual but intermittent water flow, and 13 major waterfalls, which require ropes to traverse.

From the Pat Keyes millsite, the trail then ascends to the Pat Keyes Ridgeline at 8,100 feet, and then follows the ridgeline westward up to cross the Inyo Crest at Pat Keyes Pass at 9,400 feet. The trail then descends 4,400 feet and passes a small spring at 7,000 feet. The trail ends in the Owens Valley at the Reward roadhead at 5,000 feet.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: In order to enjoy this rugged area, you will have to drive to a point and park a vehicle. Therefore, the BLM encourages all recreationist and travelers exploring public lands, not only within southern California but throughout the west, to use a propylene glycol based antifreeze/coolant in their touring and recreation vehicles. Proven safer, it will have minimal impacts on both the wildlife and the environment should a leak occur. Please help BLM protect our desert wildlife. . .and their fragile desert environment!.

Should you decide to hunt in this area, the BLM, during established hunting seasons, is encouraging all hunters and recreational shooters to use lead free non-toxic shot and bullets. Proven safer, non-toxic shot significantly reduces the risks of accidental lead poisoning of wildlife and will have minimal impacts on the environment.

Also, please park your vehicles or set-up camp in previously disturbed sites.

For more information contact:
Bureau of Land Management
Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S. Richmond Rd.
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
Telephone: 760-384-5400
Or the website: http://www.ca.blm.gov/ridgecrest

3/07

Lonesome Miner Trail

Pat Keyes Trailhead to the mouth of Hunter Canyon Inyo Mountains APRIL – MAY 2009

text and photo by Lawrence Wilson

Participants: Kim Coakley, Jerry Goss, Stacey Goss, Nick J., John Moody, Maura Moody, Catherine O'Riley, Jo Plante, Jessica Rothhar, Bruce Stakem and Lawrence Wilson

FRIDAY 24 April Jerry, Stacey, Catherine, John, Maura, Kim and I met at the campground at the intersection of Highway 395 and Highway 168, one and a half miles north of Big Pine, at 9:00 to set up the car shuttle. Bags are moved around between vehicles before Kim, John and Jerry drive off to Saline Valley to leave some gear and vehicles at the mouth of Hunter Canyon for the end of the backpack.

Maura, Stacey, Catherine and I spend the day playing tourists in Owens Valley. Driving south down 395 we stop by Mary Austin's house in Independence. We spent over an hour in the nearby Eastern California Museum. We look around an interesting and eclectic collection of exhibits including those on Japanese internment at Manzanar, local geology, natural history, Native American artefacts, mining & agricultural tools, and the must see false teeth made from melted toothbrushes & coyote teeth and array of old farming equipment to see in the grounds outside of the museum.

We drive another six miles south down 395 to the site of the Japanese internment camp at Manzanar. This has a really interesting visitor centre and museum in the old concert hall. Nothing left standing now, just overgrown fruit trees.

Late afternoon we meet back up with the others who have set up the vehicle shuttle and head into Lone Pine for a restaurant meal before the eight days of backpacking ahead of us. I had liver and onions, much to most people's horror.

Then its north on 395 before turning east opposite Manzanar onto the Manzanar-Reward Road, which crosses an old WW2 airstrip that is now in total disrepair and populated by cattle, to reach our trailhead. We spend the evening drinking a few libations, and having a fun time just hanging out.

SATURDAY 24 April 6:00 and I'm awake. I had to get the tent fly because I was cold just lying out in the sleeping bag, but after I had done that I was alright. It had been a lovely starry night, but with a very chill wind.

8:40 It is now sunny, but still with a chill wind. The snowy peaks of the Sierras lie opposite us across the other side of Owens Valley. Jessica & Nick have both arrived. Maura, Jessica, Catherine and Stacey are sheltering from the wind behind one of the trucks waiting for one member of the crew to get himself sorted. After a brief team talk its 9:15 and the group is heads out in ones and twos. The terrain is pretty barren, speckled with creosote bushes. There are white clouds overhead in a blue sky.

9:30 Jerry is signing the Pat Keyes Trail Head register and we are off on the Lonesome Miner Trail proper. There is a good zigzag trail up, but within half an hour I'm having a breather on a little knoll. The skies are clearing and are blue except for a few wisps of white cloud along the peaks of the Sierras opposite. Nick's truck can be clearly seen down below near the trailhead. It is sunny, but very, very windy, so nice and cool for hiking. We pass what is meant to be an Indian 'offering rock.'

10:40 We are at the Moody's rest spot in the sun (& wind). The slopes have been dotted with creosote bushes and a number of different flowers on the way up, including a pretty purple one. It is too windy for my wide brimmed hat to stay on half of the time. The others are catching up, Jessica is way ahead, she's obviously not carrying enough this morning. Dust is blowing around at the southern end of the Owens Valley and there is a north easterly wind blowing here.

11:10 We head out again. Soon it gets hot as the wind drops. By noon we start seeing bright red Indian Paintbrush and another red flower that was initially thought to be some sort of penstimon, and we soon stop to let everyone catch up. A cool breeze starts up again. There are tremendous views down to the Owens Valley, and then across to the Sierras.

13:00 Lunch away from the wind, bright sun, and great views of the Sierras again. A few hikers have lain down and dozed off, having an after lunch nap.

14:35 finally leave lunch spot and within half an hour we reach a familiar hollow, our camp spot, and I, for one, am glad that the hiking is done for the day. Nick and I are camped up on a little ridge to the south of the others with wonderful views up and down the Owens Valley from near our tents.

18:30 we join the others in their little groups down the bottom. I manage to lie on an ants' nest near Jessica and get well

Sierra Club Outings

bitten a few times on the neck and throat by some 'fire' ants.

Jerry does his beer 'trick', producing a dozen cans of Corona from behind a rock. Earlier Jerry had retrieved the full gallon water containers for each of us from three separate stashes he (and Lynne Buckner with one gallon) had made previously, kindly carrying the water up from the valley floor so that we wouldn't have to today with our full backpacks.

SUNDAY 26 April I was nice and warm in the tent last night but I find ice on the tent pole and the inside of the fly sheet. Stunning views across the Owens Valley to the Sierras while I'm cooking breakfast.

8:25 We are off after a brief team talk, leaving up a steep slope of 'cat litter' and soon reach the ruins of a stone cabin and the remains of a spring nearby. We resume climbing up tree clad slopes and rest near an Indian sleeping circle. The trail continues to wind up through trees but is well marked by ducks. We take it in turns to lead.

11:45 After a hard climb we reach our lunch spot. I sit looking at the snow clad Sierras. I'm in the sun, with my boots off and quite content. Again one or two of the punters are quite happy to lie and doze. This is hardly surprising. Yesterday we had climbed up over 3,500 feet to our campsite, and today we had climbed a further 2,000 feet or more, so that we were now on the Inyo Crest at some 9,500 feet.

12:45 We can see into Cougar Canyon and stunning views of Saline Valley beyond. We pass through patches of snow. Tremendous views down into Pat Keyes Canyon on the other side of this ridge, with snow speckled ridges beyond. I'm feeling the altitude and am a bit headachy. The trail leads down through trees, but well marked by ducks.

14:45 Rest stop by a ruined stone cabin with its fireplace still intact. Waucobe Peak (the highest peak in the Inyos) is clearly visible to the north. A nearby giant 'phallic' rock generates much interest.

15:35 Saddling up to go down into Pat Keyes Canyon. The trail zigzags down a steep canyon side in a series of switchbacks. It's getting late in the day and gradually the group gets more and more spread out as tiredness kicks in (we will have descended some 2500 feet by the end of the afternoon). One or two people take a tumble. In the process of one fall John dislocates a shoulder, but with Maura's calm and collected response, aided by Bruce, the dislocation is put back in its socket and John is able to continue. He said his shoulder felt better with the backpack on.

17:30 Down at 'camp', amongst the ruins on the floor of Pat Keyes Canyon, John was sorted out with cold compresses (creek water in Ziploc bags). Maura had given John some pain killers, and he was checked out before going to bed. Around the kitchen spot we swapped first aid notes and Jerry and I got out our first aid manuals. More than half the participants had wilderness first aid training.

MONDAY 27 April 8:05 We are heading out. John seems well up for it. Soon we rest at an old Native American site after a climb up a steep slope to get across to the other side of the creek. We find a grinding stone and an arrowhead. It's already very hot. This rest spot is pleasant to repose after the first little section today, which everyone found hard.

A good switch back trail after our break, but there are some loose granular bits. We are now climbing up the left side of Pat Keyes Canyon (looking upstream).

10:10 a rest break on the 'ridge' having passed two patches of snow. John has been doing ok, but his left hand is swollen, and he says he has a throbbing inside his shoulder.

11:30 I'm resting again, now in a flattish tree covered area, having caught up with the three hares. We wait for everyone to get together so we don't lose anyone. There has been some great level walking traversing the sides of the canyon, with views down to the desert in Saline Valley beyond. There is a hot sun, but it is still a little cool when standing around. Stacey finds the nearby BLM gear cache. We eat lunch having ascended some 1000 feet this morning.

13:00 We're getting ready to head out again.

13:25 Some of us head on down to the ruined stone cabin further along trail, while the others take a side trip along the top to an old mine site. There are great views down McElvoy Canyon now to Saline Valley and the hot springs.

Coming down the 'ridge' the trail was hard to find for a while as the cairns were widely spaced, it would have been a bit embarrassing if we had lost it. But Jessica out in front finds the way. Then the trail veers left, zigzagging in switchbacks around to the left. It's not always totally clear, so we place some rocks to make more small ducks.

14:15 It's nice to sit in the shade. I'm tired and glad I didn't go on the side trip up which the others did.

We tell stories of rehydrating using a tube, a funnel, or one of those collapsible water bottles and a tube.

Once we are all re-grouped and rested we follow a good trail downwards, hugging the canyon side affording some wonderful views of a swathe of green vegetation snaking up the bottom of McElvoy Canyon. We pass several mines leading into the rock on our right as we descend, including the infamous beekeeper's repository.

17:00 We are all safely down at the mill site after a descent of some 2500 feet this afternoon and are hunting for our campsites. There is plenty of accessible water available. Later, after most people have eaten, Jessica reads 'The Story of the Beekeeper of McElvoy Canyon' to us in the perfect setting. It is warmer this evening at this wlower elevation.

TUESDAY 28 April 8:10 We are heading out and by 8:40 I'm resting after a gnarly bit traversing the left side of the canyon, bouldering over loose rocks which are on a steep hillside. We have to skirt above the dense growth of bushes along the creek bed.

9:55 Stunning views to the far side of McElvoy Canyon. This is the first day that I really feel physically into this back-

pack; it is a shame about the kitchen sink I'm carrying though.

John is amazing the way he keeps plodding on after popping his shoulder. The trail has been more than rough in places, rocky and not stable, some nasty bushes to get tangled up in and trip. I cannot imagine doing this without a stick. Other bits of the trail have been fairly good, with lots of switchbacks and also well marked. The sun shines brightly.

Earlier on a fighter jet flew up the canyon and banked at the end. One trip participant, paranoid as ever, thought it was tracking us as we have at least two electronic devices with us transmitting. We have passed Indian Paintbrush and another red flower. There's snow on the high ridges at the head of McElvoy Canyon. Saline Valley at the opposite end of McElvoy Canyon is hazy, but here on the slopes there is contrasting shadow and brightly lit areas. It is pleasantly warm. People can pick out yesterday's trail on the slopes opposite

Further along the trail gets very gnarly going across a rock slide. Those at the front are told to wait so others could catch up as the route is not very obvious. We carry on in our own good time enjoying the views and taking a few little breaks.

12:00 Lunch on small boulder fall across the trail which has become more level, skirting the side of the canyon.

13:00 Another break and drop our backpacks for a side trip. Tremendous views into Saline Valley. Across on the far side of Keynote Canyon ahead Jerry has seen a 'trail' coming in from the right cutting across the canyon side opposite.

He cannot see a structure, but a 'rock wall', perhaps manmade, is very prominent from where we are looking on this side of the canyon, even with the naked eye. Jerry borrows a monocular to look it at further. He is really intrigued because in all his years of exploring the Inyos he has never come across 'this trail' before, and he plans to go over there and check it out on a future trip to the Inyos.

16:00 We reach our camp on Keynote Ridge after an elevation gain of about 2500 feet today.

The snow I had collected earlier by the trail came in useful for both a cold compress for John's shoulder and 'ice' for our Kahlua & tequila cocktails.

After dinner, Nick one of our engineer's in residence, uses some of John's wire to repair Jessica's sunglasses.

WEDNESDAY 29 April 8:55 Survivor Peak with a fine smattering of snow looms behind the ridgeline ahead.

9:25 I am off behind the front runners and soon looking down at Keynote Mine before descending through the trees bushes & trees to our left to cut down on potential exposure. Then across the old mangled metal tracks to where a rusted metal ore wagon sits on the other side of the scree slope. Some people go exploring the inside of the nearby mineshaft. There's a wagon inside that can be moved along a short stretch of track.

10:00 Near the canyon floor, along with a conveyor belt and some metal hoppers is a large bulldozer which people delight in being photographed with. Stacey notes how a boulder smashed a load of mining equipment by the bulldozer, also points out the rock wall embankment of the trail she and Marti Dickes followed on a previous visit, which lead nowhere.

10:40 Trail up to Beveridge Ridge Cabin. Kim, Bruce & Catherine check out the well in Keynote Canyon which is meant to be a very unreliable source of water. I soon pass a few small patches of snow by the trail. The sun is hot now and sweat is running off me. I top up a water bottle with snow from inside a ruined stone cabin further along the trail.

11:05 At Beveridge Ridge Cabin there is a little snow in the 'drainage scars' on the mountainsides opposite. We sit outside the wooden cabin in the hot sun eating an early lunch and waiting for the Keynote Well explorers to join us. Stacey's salami tasted heavenly, for some reason I seem to have gone totally off peanut butter.

12:45 There is now a cool breeze as I am preparing to leave. Stacey and I both remember the descent into Beveridge Canyon as being a relatively easy hike a couple of years ago, though granted we were carrying daypacks and empty water containers to fill up below. I cannot image 'charging' back afterwards with the full water containers either. There is a covering of bright red Indian Paintbrush.

14:10 A lovely cool breeze near the tramway towers. Nick & Kim went to check out the mine sites on the canyon side that the tramway lead to. Below we can see a boiler's tall 'smoke stack' and a stamping engine in the trees on the floor of the canyon. The 'wheel' of the stamping engine has an intriguing 'pentagon structure' when seen sideways on.

Jerry and I had to clear an old fallen down tree out of the creek to make space to get water.

No room for a 'bathing pool' today as per two years ago. We wait for the flow of water to flush the creek clear of 'debris' to make it easier to fill up some water containers. The five 'Beveridge Babes' relax in the sunshine.

15:10 I drank one litre of water from the creek, and I'm carrying a second litre. There are a few awkward little places as we first skirt the right hand slopes of the canyon, and then the left hand slopes above the thick bushes, before we find a way along the canyon floor where it has opened up and the trail comes and goes a bit. At least this part provides relatively easier walking though we have to force our way through a few patches of bushes by the trail. There are the remains of a number of stone cabins, including fireplaces, and other structures that we pass here.

16:10 It is a great relief to reach Frenchy's Cabin and sit and chat for a while. Today has involved an overall elevation gain of 1300 feet and a loss of 2900 feet. Nick has put his engineering talents to good use and repaired the water pipe outside of the cabin so we now have running water from out of a pipe, which makes water collection a hell of a lot easier.

Everyone tries to offload food before tomorrow's climb out of the canyon. We have a jolly little evening eating and drinking, and it is not too chilly either, I'm still in bare feet and flip flops by the time I go to bed and dusk falls.

Trip Reports

THURSDAY 30 April 8:10 It is already hot as we leave Frenchy's Cabin and follow the trail as it drops down and crosses the creek just upstream of the north of the cabin.

9:10 A rest stop after a steep relentless climb on mainly good trail zigzagging along switchbacks, crossing a few boulder falls, including a large one just before the rest stop.

I'm soaked in sweat. I'm carrying about seven litres of water, maybe more, to last me until tomorrow lunchtime.

9:35 More relentless UP. We start on the right side of the boulder slide, then where it is easier; we cross to the other side past a tree midway. Then there is more incessant zigzagging up and up and up. It's not as hard as the climb two days ago.

10:35 A rest stop, but there is still a ways to go yet. Jerry said today there was a twenty per cent chance of rain.

11:05 we head out again and by 11:30 we reach the ridge. Eventually we stop for lunch on Hunters Ridge.

13:15 I follow the leaders down into Robles Canyon towards the main Hunter Canyon and Saline Valley. It is a zigzagging trail, not too exposed, but need to concentrate all of the time (for me anyway). There is a nice cool breeze, but lots of sun. I can hear the sound of a jet. We see Bighorn Cabin below, by a rocky knoll. There's not much flat space around it to camp by the look of it.

15:00 We hang out in shade of Bighorn Cabin for over an hour, we are all pretty knackered. We climbed 2200 feet and descended 1400 feet today. We check out the food and gear stored in metal boxes, and old photos of people in the Inyos.

It is still hot when I'm putting up my tent up. After dinner we all gather together outside the hut and Nick reads an account of a group's misadventures hiking down Daisy Canyon following the tramway trestles to Saline Valley.

FRIDAY 1 May 5:45 I am up to see dark clouds overhead for the first time this backpack, but the sky soon clears.

8:00 Overcast but soon hot. On a good trail this morning.

9:05 We are entering what is a veritable 'flower garden' in Robles Canyon, with a 'lupine meadow' with in addition Indian paintbrush and pink roses in flower. The trail then climbs out of Robles Canyon before dropping into Hunter Canyon. The downstream view is of stark rock walls, but the view upstream is less forbidding with more trees and bushes on the canyon floor and a tall smoke stack rising above them.

9:55 The steam engine and boiler near the water filling place, the inscription found on 'Lawrence the Tank Engine' reads 'JC Hoadley & Co. Lawrence, Mass USA', and the inscription found on the fire grate door reads 'Treadwell & Co. Sole agents, San Francisco, Cal'. The boiler with the tall smoke stack has a manufacturer's name plate hidden behind bushes that reads 'Dundon's, San Francisco, Boiler Workers, 131 & 3 Folsom St, SF Calif'. The 'Lawrence machine' has a few nuts and fittings not rusted (our engineers' opinion is that they are brass so that they will not rust in the steam). The boiler with the tall smoke stack machine also has some brass fittings on top of it.

I fill up six and a half litres of water to last for the rest of the backpack, and I also drink over a litre straight down. Later I find some pieces of broken pottery on the 'trash slope' behind the machines, one piece has inscription 'trade mark... England' with an anchor at an oblique angle with a downward pointing trident placed across it. Further up the canyon are the remains of an old stone cabin with a caved in corrugated iron roof.

11:20 Heading off after a long relaxing break in a real neat pleasant spot. Overcast skies, and a breeze. Willow trees, cottonwood and wild roses abound here. I have been well bitten through my clothing. We follow the trail up the other side of the canyon.

12:20 Most of us have made it onto a little saddle on the ridge. It was a good trail up, especially where it zigzags across rock falls, only the odd few steps when I felt any real exposure. We can see across Hunter Canyon and into Robles Canyon and up to where last night's camp at Bighorn Cabin was. We go across and admire the views down into Saline Valley, particularly from a large rock outcrop. Jerry's truck is clearly visible by a ribbon of green in foreground below.

13:20 We are heading out again and within half an hour we have sadly reached the final campsite of our backpack. We have descended 2000 feet from morning's camp before climbing back 1200 from the bottom of Hunter Canyon.

15:30 A few drops of rain fall as I sit and talk to some of the others. Sometime later the midges begin to bite. Afternoon tea down at my campsite takes on an air of excitement; Nick catches my tent as it nearly gets blown off the ledge by a strong gust of wind. Everyone kindly gives me a hand to relocate my gear. Rest of the day is spent admiring the views of Saline Valley sheltering out of the wind behind some rocks. It is still cloudy and overcast, but not threatening rain.

SATURDAY 2 May 8:10 We are off and it is an easy clear trail this morning, zigzagging down, though one could easily miss it in a few places if not paying attention. At one point we need to turn down into a wash, while a trail also continues skirting the mountainside. Saline Valley, with its dry lake bed, fills the view like a huge outdoor IMAX cinema screen with absolutely stunning views that do not quite look real, but are well worth the previous seven days of backpacking.

We enter an altitude zone replete with a vast array of different brightly coloured wildflowers, and even yours truly is enthused enough to keep stopping and take photos of the entire local flora on display. This is certainly the most intense and prolonged display of wildflowers during the whole backpack.

9:35 Kim, Catherine, Jerry and Nick are at the wooden platforms and iron bed frames that are the remains of Gold Standard Mine Camp. Our vehicles can be clearly seen below in the wash. Earlier Nick had pointed out the tramway (which featured in his reading of the previous evening) running from the dried out lake bed below, some of the towers of

which clearly stand out.

10:15 We leave After about half an hour there is a little exposed section which was not very pleasant as I inch around a narrow ledge of a trail clinging onto whatever I can get hold of. I wouldn't fancy doing this bit with a full backpack, but I guess it's not really that bad? A bit further on Jerry points out a little Desert Five Spot Flower in the middle of the trail (pale mauve with red spots inside the petals). It is the only one we have come across he says.

11:20 The trail drops into a little 'gulch' and skirts a thick growth of mesquite bushes.

12:00 We are all safely down and enjoying some libations in the bright sun after a descent of 4600 feet. We all pile into Jerry and the Moody's trucks to head out for Saline Valley Hot Springs. We spend the rest of the day hanging out at the Upper Hot Springs getting showered, then soaking in the pools and relaxing in the shade drinking, eating and chatting, before the long drive back the following day. Jo made some excellent Sushi and Jerry supplied the cold drinks.

APPENDIX

Desert flora seen on trail included: aster, beaver tailed cactus, black sage, desert five spot, desert globe mallow, desert trumpet, ephedra, indian paintbrush, larkspur, lupine, prickly poppy, primrose, silver sage, wild rose, yellow 'composites'.

Desert fauna: garter snake, humming bird, lizards (black, yellow & black hooped with black collar; grey), rattlesnake, red tailed hawk, rodent (indeterminate small), song sparrow.

RESOURCES

BLM Beveridge Canyon Trail:
http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/ridgecrest/beveridge.html

BLM Lonesome Miner Trail:
http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/ridgecrest/lonesome.html

Eastern California Museum:
http://www.inyocounty.us/ecmuseum/ecmdlochours.htm

Eastern Sierra Interagency Visitor Center:
http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/about/#interagency

Manzanar National Historic Site:
http://www.nps.gov/manz/index.htm

Mary Austin's Home, 253 Market Street, Independence:
http://www.noehill.com/inyo/cal0229.asp

Digonnet, M (2009) 'Hiking Western Death Valley – Panamint, Saline, and Eureka Valleys', Palo Alto, Michel Digonnet (published by the author) ISBN-13: 978-0-9659178-1-0 ISBN-10: 9659178-1-9

Snails Endemic to Desert Springs

by Cassie Barr

Snails have recently been petitioned by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Mollusk Conservation Society for protection under the endangered species act. They are concerned with 42 different species of fresh water snails in the Great Basin Desert. These snails depend on groundwater for their survival, and with the already planned pumping of groundwater, which will be 100 ft. in some areas, springs will dry up and thus threaten these rare species with extinction. Snails have lived in these constantly flowing springs for thousands--or even millions--of years and, according to the Center for Biological Diversity, "Spring snails — tiny and inconspicuous freshwater mollusks — in fact help make life possible for countless other species sharing their desert-oasis homes, converting algae, microorganisms, and decaying matter into edibles for other invertebrates, fish, birds, turtles, amphibians, and small mammals. Their presence shapes water chemistry, nutrient cycling, and rates of productivity and breakdown. Without them, food chains would unravel and wetland living conditions could fall fatally out of whack".

The Mojave Desert Eco Region has 30 species of fresh water snails, with many found in only one or two isolated locations, according to the Nature Conservancy. In an article by Schmidt-Nielsen, C. R. Taylor and Amiram Shkolnik, 1971, I found a detailed description of desert snail behavior. This study of Middle Eastern desert snails states that snails eat the surface of rocks and pebbles which contain algae and lichens. The snails feed, reproduce and are active only when it rains, otherwise they are dormant.

To survive the heat of the desert these Middle Eastern snails have an air space in their shells for insulation. They also burrow in the ground or hide under rocks--some were found 10 cm. underground at the Dead Sea. When snails go dormant they seal the entrance of their shells with a layer of slime that hardens, leaving a small space for air.(In a museum collection snails have survived dormant for 6 years without food or water.) As snails have no energy reserves, they maintain their metabolic rate by reducing their mass. Note: I'm not sure how much or the behaviors of these snails relate to our North American desert dwelling snails.

Snails remind me of pup fish. They both need water to survive and at one time there was plenty. But as the water became more scarce, these creatures became isolated from each other and formed distinct species. Although pup fish may be "cuter," snails are just as in need of protection.. Snails live practically everywhere there is water, and they are considered an indicator species for water quality, beside being a fascinating creature of many adaptations.

Tram tower above Beveridge. The tram started at the mine 800 feet above Beveridge and ended at the bottom of Beveridge Canyon. Most of the timbers in this tower are of native pinon from higher elevations.

BEVERIDGE

A THREE-MYSTERY GHOST TOWN

"The Album" April 1992

by Thomas S. Budlong

Well over a hundred years ago the Inyos experienced a mining boom. At the south end of the range, opposite Owens Lake, the Cerro Gordo silver mine quickly grew to the largest operation in the area. North from Cerro Gordo were hundreds of smaller mines, prospects, and small mills dotting the canyons and ridges, but none could come close to Cerro Gordo's size. Written history for these independent operations is non-existent — rumor is that it went up in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake fire. With neither roads nor records most sites have been forgotten. But rumor also told that the next largest "town," if it could be called that, was Beveridge, named after John Beveridge, one of the early mining promoters. Several years ago I became aware of Beveridge, and determined to search it out.

For a long time the only topo maps for the Inyos were the small, difficult 15-minute variety. Once I tried to use the New York Butte quadrangle to get to New York Butte on a day hike. But it was too far for one day and I kept getting lost since I couldn't see that the map and the terrain were related. I didn't give those maps much respect. They were no help in finding Beveridge.

Then in the late '80s the 7½ -minute editions were published. Aside from vastly improved accuracy and detail one of them also showed, in the typical laconic fashion of a map, "Beveridge, Ruins" in Beveridge Canyon on the eastern side of the Inyo crest. It also showed a tramway from Beveridge half way up the side of the canyon. It was all quite far in, but with a road or trail shown part way.

I searched books and other maps for mentions of this place and found only one, a tantalizing aside at the end of a story on other activities in the Inyos. Of course undisturbed ghost towns simply don't exist anymore. They've all been discovered, looted for artifacts, washed away in flash floods, or rotted to oblivion. But here was hope and dream like winning the lottery. If it wasn't shown on maps until this recent topo, if it wasn't popular in the literature, if it had no trail or road to it, then it must be almost virgin.

One fall I visited Ballarat, the well known ghost town in Panamint Valley. About all that's left are a few old adobe walls scratched up from the hardscrabble around there, and one habitable building. Some fellow had taken up caretaker residence, kind of a self-appointed mayor of himself. When the mood fit he would sit on the front porch to see who went by. I stopped to talk about Ballarat, Panamint City, gold rushes, and other such interesting places and times. With the intrigue of the new map fresh upon me I naturally mentioned Beveridge. "Oh yes," he said, "old mining town way back in the Inyos. Some fellows from the Navy Center went in there a couple years ago in a helicopter and took out the piano."

It was a well-calculated remark. What, lost Beveridge was big enough to have — A PIANO? Of course that did it; I had to find Beveridge. I rearranged my schedule. My next stop on that trip was Cerro Gordo. Then, instead of returning to Los Angeles, I drove down the eastern side to Saline Valley, then north. Where Beveridge Canyon dumps into Saline I found a twisted 4WD road going into the mountains. I followed it until I got so scared I had to turn around. At least I had the place located. This was the beginning of winter so I knew I would have to wait until spring for any kind of comfort if I wanted to explore further. The Inyos can get terribly inhospitable at the extremes of the seasons.

Over the winter I looked at the topo map more closely. The road I had followed for a while was shown as a trail that stopped a mile short of and a thousand feet higher than Beveridge. I ordered the aerial photograph of the map. It wasn't detailed enough to show the "road." It revealed vegetation at the bottom of Beveridge Canyon and several springs a little up from the townsite apparently strong enough to create the growth. And all winter I couldn't get that off-hand remark about THE PIANO out of my mind.

Next May I arranged a trip, leaving Los Angeles on a Friday night to spend Saturday and Sunday searching out Beveridge. The drive to Saline Valley from Los Angeles is about six hours, four paved and the rest on gravel. The route runs past Olancha and Darwin, then on the gravel through a yucca tree forest (home to herds of wild burros) to a six-thousand-foot pass between the Nelson range and Hunter Mountain with a magnificent view of Panamint Valley and its sand dunes way down below, and then down Grapevine Canyon and into Saline Valley. Saline is a huge sink covering hundreds of square miles. It's being considered for inclusion in the Death Valley National Monument boundaries. The very bottom, where everything collects, is at one thousand feet and can be as hot as it gets anywhere. It's a dry lake that was mined for salt deposits in the early 1900s.

Springs around the dry lake, and at other seemingly random places in Saline Valley, provide oases thick with low trees and grasses adapted to the high salt concentration in the ground. The springs would be interesting to explore later. The BLM has fenced some as protection from the wild burros who live in the lower elevations. These, and their high-altitude cousins, are feral ancestors of abandoned prospectors' burros. You run onto them in odd places and hear them talking long-distance to each other with their crazy hee-haws. I spent the night on the valley floor listening to them.

Early the next morning I attacked the road that had stopped me six months before. It switches up a slope rising from the valley like a Manhattan skyscraper. Four wheel drive and granny low were in order, no question. From a little distance up this road it seems you can see the entire valley below. As it ascends the view gets even more astonishing. It compelled me to stop and gape at the emptiness, thinking it will surely be a long time before Los Angeles gets here.

After switching up the face of the foothills the road finally turns inward, grinding over ridges and through gullies and clinging to precarious slopes. My hat is off to the guy who made it, and to whoever thought it up in the first place. (I would have kicked him out for proposing such a track.)

The vehicle road ends at the silent Snowflake talc mine at about 3200 feet. A closer squint at the topo map revealed a small mark denoting the transition from 4WD road to foot trail. This was the start of the trail to Beveridge.

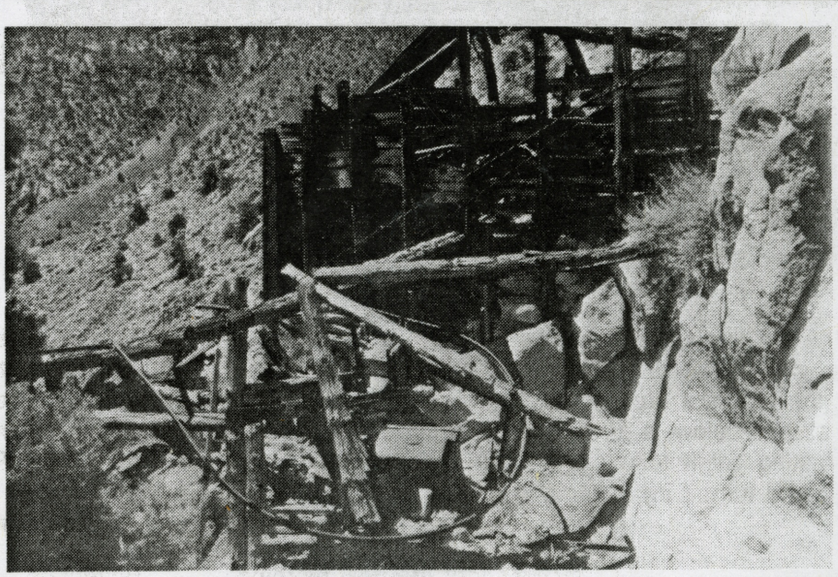
p.35 top: Water came from a spring up-canyon, carried by a ten-inch wire-wrapped wooden pipe. Center: "Modern" house in bottom of canyon. Made partly of sawn lumber, with rotted canvas walls, it is probably only 70 years old. The perennial stream supports growth that has almost consumed it. Bottom: Ore loading facility and tram turn around at mine above Beveridge; loop in foreground is collapsed rail.

So I loaded my pack and started up the foot trail. It's a no-nonsense trail. It makes no apologies for getting to the top in as short a distance as possible. Mining trails are not built to government specs. They were paid for by the job, not the mile, and the job was to move only enough rocks out of the way so you didn't stumble a lot, and never mind the grade. There is evidence explosives were used here and there to bust up some of the larger rocks, and, in one place, to get through a persistent limestone ledge. But the trail is never built up to make a walkway. It was a minimal construction effort and probably hasn't seen maintenance in a hundred years. Credit its continued existence to the dry climate as much as the choice of grade location.

The foot trail roughly follows the north side of Beveridge Canyon, giving nice views of the wiggling canyon bottom. I was part way up when military fighter jets started playing on the floor of Saline Valley, making screaming, booming noises. Once they sounded closer and I realized a jet was flying inside Beveridge Canyon, nimbly banking left then right then left to follow the turns. I looked down on it a thousand feet below me for the several few seconds it was in view.

The trail marked on the map, as far as it goes, accurately matches the actual trail. On schedule I rounded a prominent corner at the 6600-foot level and only later found that the trail doesn't stop there, as the map advertises. A few old prospects marked the spot, about a thousand feet higher than the Beveridge townsite and over a mile east.

Believing the trail had played out I aimed at Beveridge, now visible, and started scrambling across and down over the rocks. I expected to make a sloping lateral traverse, but a huge, impassable, near-vertical debris gouge soon blocked my way. So it was straight down the sixty-degree boulder slope, aiming directly for the bottom of Beveridge Canyon. About half way down I saw below me a comparative freeway — a wide, flat, well-constructed path several hundred feet above the canyon bot-



Five-stamp mill. The rock pile covers a boiler which fed a steam engine to power the mill.

The evening in the cabin was idyllic — mountain solitude, perfect air temperature (mid-May at 5600 feet), just the slightest breeze, no bugs, gentle sounds from the stream below, a garden of trees and roses, and an interesting cabin to explore. I fixed a meal, read until dark, and turned in. But this was not Beveridge.

I climbed out shortly after first light the next morning. Back at the top where the trail "ended," I found my mistake. The real trail to Beveridge took a slight jog up; I had gone straight and had left the trail right where the map said it should end. The map makers couldn't talk to the long gone miners who knew the trail to learn that it continues. By relying on the map instead of common sense I had missed the jog and ended up doing the rock stumble down to what turned out to be the suburbs of Beveridge. It was too late on Sunday to do anything about it so I resolved to return.

tom, disappearing around a point of rock. At the visible end was a tailings slope. It turned out to be a mine, and the "freeway" was a rail bed to roll ore cars from the mine to a chute. An orphaned ore car in perfect working condition sat on the rails. The chute led to some processing machinery at the bottom of the canyon. This whole trailless 1200 foot descent, requiring careful scrambling, took a little over two hours.

At the bottom was a cozy little miner's cabin, framed with 2x4s and roofed and partly sided with corrugated tin. The front and back walls under the roof peak had apparently once been covered with tent material, long since rotted to shreds. It was well stocked, containing a lumpy bed, a chair, a bench, and assortment of debris. Next to a mining notice tacked on the wall was a greeting for visitors: "You're welcome to the cabin. Please leave it neat." I accepted the offer and the obligation.

The bottom of Beveridge canyon here has a flowing stream. I estimated the flow rate to be about 20 gpm — respectable for a lot of streams in wetter locations. But it's choked with growth, mostly California Rose bushes and willow trees, and a scattering of a few other species. The roses are a particularly vigorous variety, with long, stringy stems, dense with sharp thorns. The intense growth makes it almost impossible to walk up and down the bottom of the canyon. In fact it's even hard to find a place to fill a water jug; the water-loving plants hide the stream. Even when I did manage to fill up the water was full of tiny bits of organic debris, too small to filter out through my bandana. I concluded it was extra nourishment, and have suffered no ill effects.

Two weeks later I was back, this time spending a night at Snowflake mine. Driving up the 4WD road from the valley floor in the dark was as good as the scariest Hollywood movies. The bouncing headlights turned rocks and shadows into lurching monsters and when the road skirted precipices the only visible world was empty space. Snowflake mine was a welcome end and gave me a lonely but comfortable night's lodging. I started walking early Friday morning and, knowing the route this time, was into Beveridge in six and a half hours.

Now here's Beveridge's Mystery Number One: I haven't figured out why the trail is built the way it is; there must be a good reason, since the miners did not build trails for exercise. The problem is that it goes up to 6600 feet and then wanders into the hills, staying betwen 6600 and 7000 feet for a mile or so until it's directly above Beveridge. Finally it follows an endless series of switchbacks down a side canyon to get to the old town, which is at 5600 feet. Now why didn't the trail builder stop climbing at 5600 feet and do his lateral at that level? It would have saved quite a bit of trail construction and certainly a lot of effort for the traveler. The only thing I can think is that before Beveridge was there, the trail went to those diggings I saw at 6600 feet (there may be more I missed), and was simply extended to Beveridge when the time came. It stayed at the high elevation to avoid debris gouges like the one that stopped my lateral traverse. As to the traveler's extra effort involved getting to Beveridge? Well, I'll bet everyone was on a horse or a mule back then, so why worry; something else was doing all the work.

The tramway shown on the map is in the same side canyon as the final switchbacked descent to Beveridge. The cabling starts at a mine shaft some distance up the mountain, makes one long swoop down to a series of supports to get over a little ridge, and then makes a final, smaller span to its terminus in the bottom of the canyon. Four cables are still hanging, tight as the day they were strung, with another on the ground. Some are half-inch, some are full one-inch cable. The two termini and the support structures on the ridge are mostly of native timber — rough pinons dragged from higher elevations and carved to shape. Several ore cars still cling to the cable at the lower terminus. The mine shaft, still whole, penetrates the mountain for a distance. I explored until I found timbers supporting the ceiling. I realized these were hundred-year old timbers, maybe rotting, supporting a roof that wouldn't support itself, and decided that someone else could search out the end. What I did see followed the twists and turns of a quartz vein, with the rails for the ore cars still in place.

The tramway turnarounds are the same basic design still used on modern ski-lifts, except more primitive, of course. The turnaround at the mine end was built onto a supporting structure immediately below the level of the shaft. Ore was dumped from the end of the rails into a large wooden bin, and from there into the ore buckets traveling on the tramway. The weight of the loaded buckets going downhill must have provided the motive power for the whole thing. At the other end was a similar turnaround where the ore was presumably dumped out.

And here now is Beveridge Mystery Number Two. Where did all the tailings go? One would expect to see a huge pile at the lower terminus. But there is none. Did flash floods carry them away? No, there is a lot of mining machinery still in the canyon bottom that would have gone too. Was the ore so rich that there was very little debris? No, if it was so rich they would not have needed the tram. I don't have any answers.

The "town" of Beveridge itself now consists of several buildings strung along the canyon bottom. They are difficult to visit because of the same rose and willow thickets I found infesting the suburbs two weeks before. Exploration demands long pants. The living cabins (I found three), are rotting and falling apart, overgrown with trees and weeds. One now has water flowing under it! I think the miners had the undergrowth cleared out and built that cabin high and dry. In the hundred-plus years since they left, the growth and debris build-up has raised the creek to floor level. Remains of a few stone houses are some distance up from the thicket on the rocky sides of the canyon. They are now low, fallen-down walls, with no signs of their roofs.

Artifacts are all over the place. Among the interesting items:

- Big heavy iron machinery, with names like "American Hoist and Derrick Company, Racine Wisconsin," and "Acme Mining Equipment Company, Erie Penna." proudly cast into their sides in huge letters. I could sense the muscle of eastern industry pouring out smoke and noise to supply the west's booming mines and mills.

- Bed frames with springs, the old outer-spring mattress type that sag in the middle, set out on the only flat spot, rusting.

- The most precarious outhouse ever, propped over a thirty-foot deep crack. It was supported on one side by the steep canyon wall and on the other by a long pole. A springy plank suspended over nothing made a path to the door.

- In the weeds, sitting there all by itself, the bench to another outhouse. The hole was perfectly intact and the floor was in good shape. There were no walls, roof, or other structure. Did you ever stop to examine an outhouse hole? It's not round; it bulges a little in front. And the edges are not cut straight; they have a thoughtful bevel to them. Somewhere someone had enough demand for manufactured outhouse holes to put serious thought into the design and then build a machine to cut the hole exactly that shape. Hooray for free enterprise, demand and supply.

- In the bottom of the canyon, large wooden processing tanks with stirring paddles in them. All the tanks are deteriorating.

- A centrifugal pump, say two feet in diameter, being swallowed by a willow. A hundred years ago it was set

down at the foot of the tree. The willow's been growing around it since, and the pump is now half buried. Another hundred years and it will have disappeared entirely — the ultimate tree spike.

• Strung up and down the course of the canyon for a mile at least, a wooden pipe, about 10 inches in diameter. It's made of long, curved, precisely-milled strips, fitted together to make a cylinder and then wrapped with wire, about one wrap per inch. Some of the sections had fallen apart, but none had rotted. I guess it was redwood, which has a reputation for durability. The wood would swell when wet and compress the joints, making a water-tight seal. With the wire wrap for strength, the pipe would be leakproof and could withstand high pressure.

• A five-stamp mill, powered by a steam engine, complete with a boiler built into the nearby rock wall.

• And a great assortment of iron things. There were iron pipes, iron bars, iron valves, iron cable, iron screws, iron nuts, iron pumps, iron stove parts, iron springs, iron everything. The iron age climaxed in Beveridge.

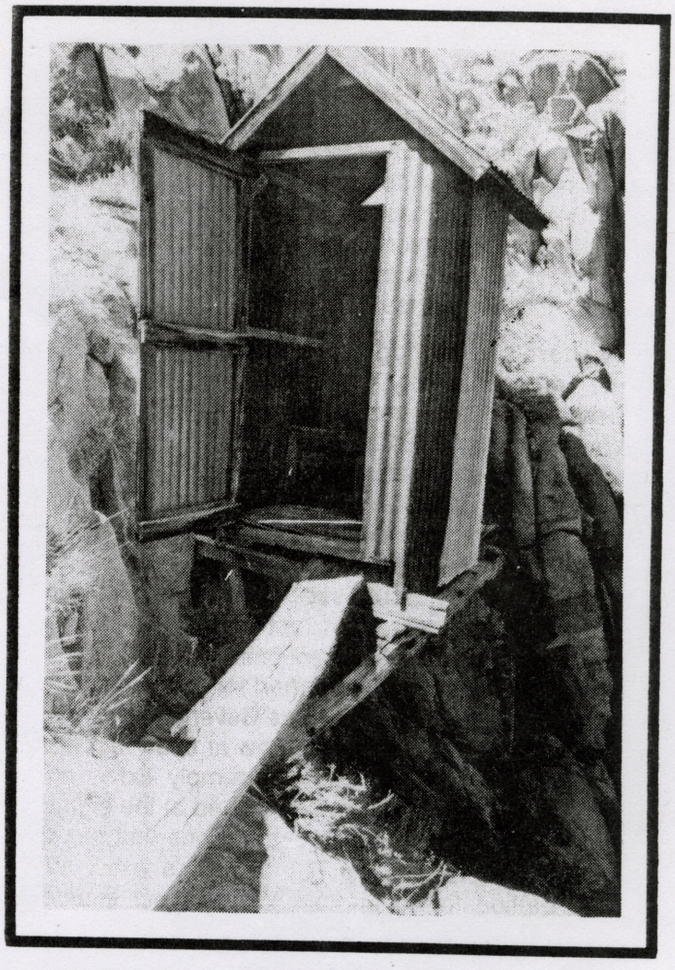
Now here's Beveridge Mystery Number Three. The five-stamp mill was *upstream* from the tramway terminus, with no tailings pile nearby. Did they haul the raw ore uphill to the mill, and then haul the processed rock off somewhere? That doesn't sound very likely. You figure that one out.

Upstream from the main part of town the canyon splits. In the left fork is a very nicely built and largely intact (except for the roof) stone house made from native granite rocks and boulders. A large fireplace with a massive one-piece granite mantle is built into one side. Perhaps this was the mine owner's residence.

The supply route for Beveridge was a trail west of town that went over the Inyo crest. It starts outside Lone Pine and crosses the crest at 9500-foot Forgotten Pass. It is longer and has more elevation gain and loss than the eastern route I took from Saline Valley. The remoteness of Saline Valley dictated this more difficult trail. Considering the driving time today, the trail from Lone Pine may still be the quickest.

Having explored Beveridge I scurried out early in the morning to have time to investigate the cold and hot springs in Saline Valley. One cold spring is an oasis of rushes and large willows, a magic spot in the midst of the heat with birds singing in the trees and frogs jumping in the grass. What wonders a little water will do since not 200 feet away is the driest, hottest, meanest, most inhospitable, foul-tasting desert imaginable. To add the final touch to this charmed place, the spring water tasted excellent.

Equally interesting are the hot springs. A rutted, dry, billow-dust track leads to three of them. The first has been turned into another oasis populated by nudists. Walking around sans everything seems like a perfectly reasonable thing to do in that little park surrounded by hostile desert. The next spring, located on a little hillock,



The Beveridge outhouse is suspended by a pole over a break in the rocks. Entry is across a springy plank.

had been improved by The Wizard, according to an inscription in the concrete. The hot flow was piped into several nicely constructed concrete and rock tubs about twelve feet in diameter. The overflow watered a patch of grass and a palm tree. Someone had erected a tarp over one of the baths to provide shade from the intense sun, but there was no one around. After a few moments of contemplation I stripped down and started a soak in this magnificent exotic discovery. What pleasure it was — the hot desert, the deliciously relaxing warm water, the ready-made shade — all set up and waiting for me.

In about fifteen minutes the owners of the tarp showed up and joined me in the pool. They were a couple from Redondo Beach who had been coming to Saline Valley and these hot pools for twenty years and knew all about them. The pools belong to nobody in particular, improved and kept in shape by unorganized volunteer community effort and the good will of whoever happens to drop by. In the spirit of sharing that is abundant in that place the Redondo couple would have thought it strange if I had not taken advantage of their shade from the tarp. They knew quite a bit about the surrounding territory, where all the Indian relics were, old timers who had lived the area, the recent history of flash floods, 4WD roads from there into Death Valley

and to old mine ruins, and all sorts of other interesting things.

As I was about to leave I mentioned the intriguing Beveridge piano. The fellow from Redondo said he had heard the same story about pianos and helicopters. He'd heard it continually in fact, from the time he started coming there twenty years before. We concluded that it was one of those comfortable yarns that tells so easily and sounds so dramatic that it has a birth and eternal life all its own despite lack of first-hand, second-hand or any-hand evidence. Judging from the layout of Beveridge itself, and Mr. Redondo's experience, the piano story is just that. a story. But it was enough to get me into the place. ✲

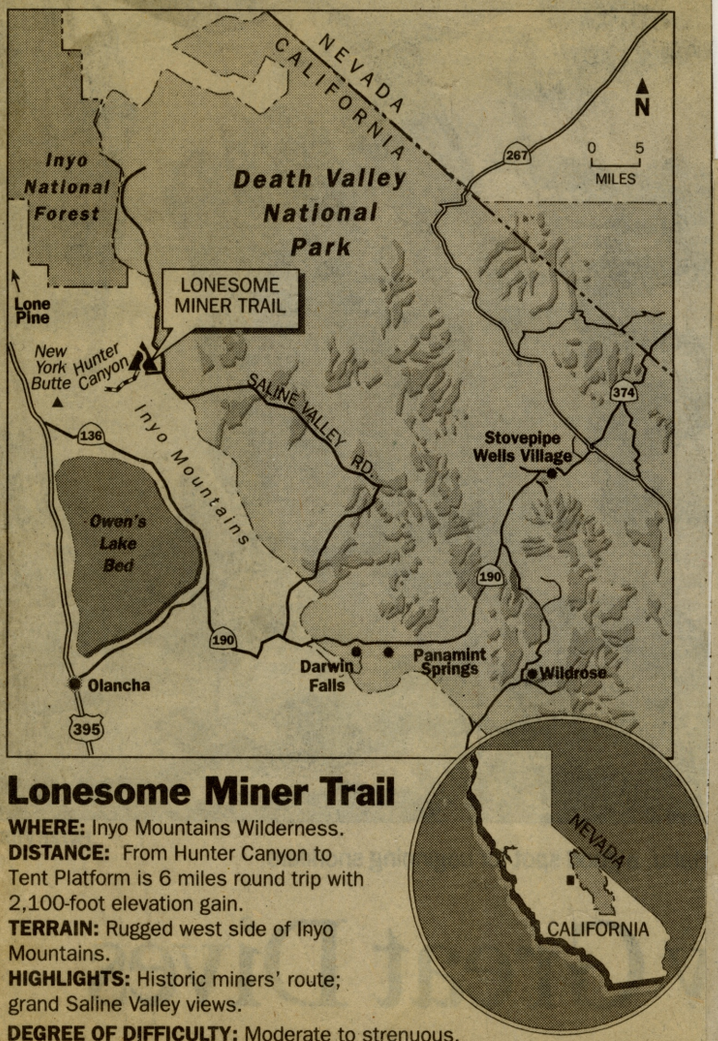
Records of life around the lesser mines in the Inyos are scarce. Knowledge of the era is therefore left to personal exploration followed by speculation. Perhaps some readers do have photographs or written records of this fascinating part of Eastern Sierra history. If so, THE ALBUM would welcome hearing from you.

Right: Original rock house nestled in bottom of canyon. Most roof supports are in place.

Below: The rock house is well over a hundred years old. Built of all native materials, most roof beams and some latillas remain. The magnificent fireplace and excellent rock walls would be appreciated in a modern home.

LOS ANGELES TIMES 3-23-97

Hiking: Inyo Mountains



Lonesome Miner Trail

WHERE: Inyo Mountains Wilderness.
DISTANCE: From Hunter Canyon to Tent Platform is 6 miles round trip with 2,100-foot elevation gain.
TERRAIN: Rugged west side of Inyo Mountains.
HIGHLIGHTS: Historic miners' route; grand Saline Valley views.
DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: Moderate to strenuous.
FOR MORE INFORMATION: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 300 S. Richmond Road, Ridgecrest, CA 93555; tel. (619) 384-5400.

HÉLÈNE WEBB / For The Times

Lonesome Route of the Prospectors

By JOHN McKINNEY

Lonesome Miner Trail is every bit as lonely as its name suggests—an old prospectors' route through some of the most rugged and remote back country in California.

No doubt most of the miners' old trails in the Inyo Mountains could be categorized as lonesome, but this particular path was named by the Bureau of Land Management and volunteer trail builders, who worked very hard to discover—and uncover—it. It traverses the Inyo Mountain Wilderness, established in 1994.

The 49-mile trail, strenuous and difficult to follow, extends from Hunter Canyon in the Saline Valley to Reward Canyon in the Owens Valley. It's a patchwork of historic trails built by miners from 1867 to 1941. The path descends into and climbs out of several steep canyons on the east side of the Inyo Mountains and passes several historic mining sites. Vistas from the trail include the High Sierra and Death Valley National Park.

The stretch through Hunter Canyon, sometimes called the Hunter Canyon Trail, is easier to follow and more accessible, and a good introduction to the east side of the Inyo Mountains.

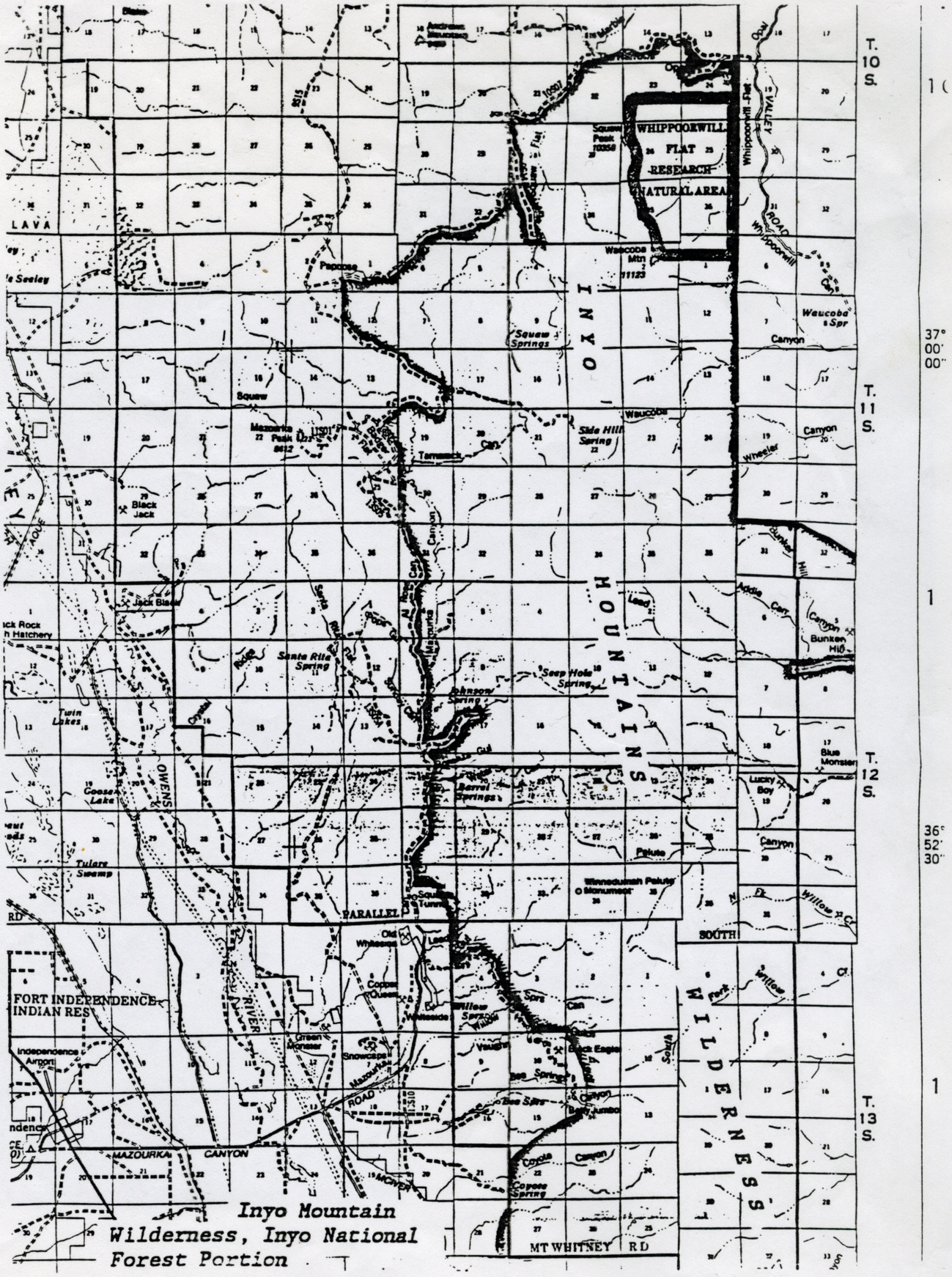
A good destination for a day hike is what I call Miners Camp, where prospectors hewed a 20-by-80-foot campsite out of a rock ledge, then built three wooden tent platforms. The ledge and platforms make an intriguing picnic site or campsite ,and offer a commanding view of the Saline Valley below.

Directions to trail head: From California Highway 190, about 35 miles southeast of Lone Pine, turn north on Saline Valley Road and drive 38 miles to Saline Valley Marsh. Half a mile north of the entrance to this site, turn west and drive a mile to road's end and the signed trail head for Hunter Canyon Trail.

The hike: From the old mine equipment in Little Hunter Can-, yon, the path follows the creek bed past some mesquite thickets up the canyon for one-quarter mile. The trail then leaves the canyon, switchbacking up to the ridge on the south side.

The ridge route continues ascending, offering grand views eastward of Saline Valley, the Last Chance Range and the northwestern reaches of Death Valley National Park. Enjoy the excellent view from Miners Camp as well.

From Miners Camp, Lonesome Miner Trail continues climbing more than 3,000 feet, steeply up the ridge, then descends steeply to Bighorn Spring about another three miles or so from the trail head.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INYO MOUNTAINS
WHIPPOORWILL FLAT RESEARCH NATURAL AREA
Whippoorwill Flat
Whippoorwill Road
Waucoba Mtn
Waucoba Spr
Waucoba Canyon
Squaw Springs
Squaw Peak
Mazourka Peak
Side Hill Spring
Wheeler
Bunker Hill
Apple Canyon
Santa Rita Spring
Seep Hole Spring
Johnson Spring
Barrel Springs
Lucky Boy
Blue Monster
Paiute
Willow Creek
Twin Lakes
Goose Lake
Tulare Swamp
OWENS RIVER
PARALLEL
SOUTH
Old Whitesides
Copper Queen
Willow Springs
Green Monster
Snowcap
Vaughn
Bee Springs
Bee Silos
Bench Eagle
Jumbo
Coyote Canyon
Coyote Spring
Mazourka Road
MAZOURKA CANYON
FORT INDEPENDENCE INDIAN RES
Independence Airport
WILDERNESS
MT WHITNEY RD
Inyo Mountain Wilderness, Inyo National Forest Portion

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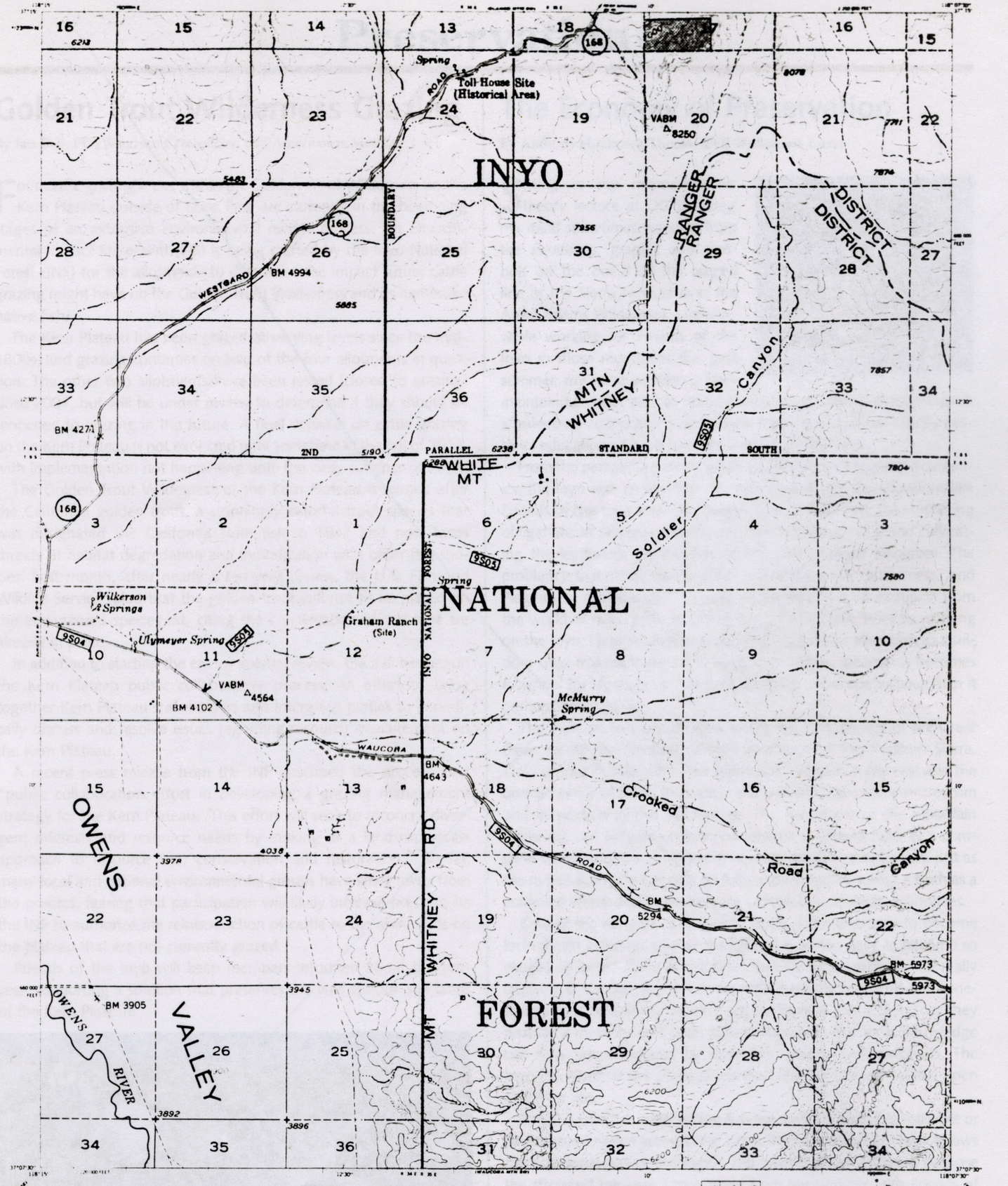


CONTOUR INTERVAL 80 FEET
Datum is mean sea level

Polyconic projection—1927 North American datum
10 000 foot grid based on California coordinate system, zone 4
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 11

Mapped, edited, and published by the
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Prepared by U.S. Forest Service Geometronics Service Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, utilizing 1976 field checked compilation guides. Additions and revisions by photogrammetric methods from U.S.F.S. aerial photography. This map does not comply with national map accuracy standards. It is an intermediate edition intended to provide standard coverage and was converted from U.S.G.S. 15' 1:48,000 Compilation Manuscripts (1951).

LEGEND

- National Forest Boundary
- Alienated lands within the National Forest boundary
- Heavy Duty Road
- Medium Duty Road
- Improved Road
- Unimproved Road
- Forest Service Road location approx.
- Forest Service Recreation Site
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Forest Road
- Forest Trail
- Trail
- Forest Service Trail location approx.
- Recreation Site other than Forest Service

TOWNSHIP AND SECTION LINE CLASSIFICATION

Surveyed, Location Reliable | Surveyed, Location Unreliable | Unsurveyed, BLM Protraction

QUADRANGLE LOCATION
INYO NATIONAL FOREST

ADJACENT QUADRANGLE LOCATIONS

PRIMARY BASE SERIES MAP
INTERIM EDITION

WAUCOBA MTN NW, CALIF.
N3707.5—W11807.5/7.5
(392-2C)
1978

Winter 2011-2012

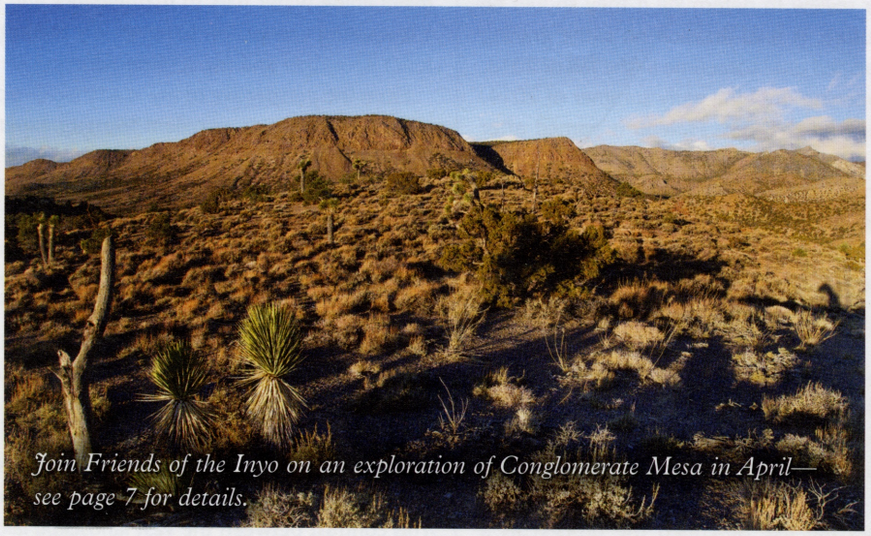
Exploration

Conglomerate Mesa

By Wano Urbonas

Welcome to what should be wilderness.

It was Tuesday, April 20, the day before John Muir's birthday. Despite a semi-retired pickup truck that protested against shifting into 5th gear, I arrived at the designated meeting spot on Saline Valley Road five minutes early. Tom Budlong was there waiting for me, as we shook hands and joked about Verizon disservice. I debated whether or not to lock my vehicle, as I hopped into Tom's reliable Landcruiser. We had a half-hour of washboard road to handle, as Tom pointed out on a map the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, the Malpais Mesa Wilderness demarcation and, in between, the route that we would be taking towards Conglomerate Mesa.



Join Friends of the Inyo on an exploration of Conglomerate Mesa in April—see page 7 for details.

Unlike the wilderness areas and national park east and west, Conglomerate remains unprotected by federal designations from threats such as industrial gold mining. And since this sliver of desert is relatively unknown, Tom is making it his mission to show folks that this forsaken place is worth saving.

We head first into the outermost section of Death Valley National Park, greet an extended family of Joshua trees, then veer north towards one of many unmarked boundaries between the official wilderness of Malpais and Conglomerate. One alien cigarette butt on the sand delineated our trailhead—a gritty reality check of the human attention this place has received. For the next five hours, eat dust, drink wind. There's a reason that they coined the region 'Malpais'—French and Spanish for 'Badlands.'

With Tom as our human GPS, we set off on a brisk-paced hike up a rocky drainage. The wind swirled and attacked in gusts—yet the rain clouds kept their distance. Occasional Indian paintbrush dotted the desert canvas. I scouted unsuccessfully for any unidentified flying objects. Winged creatures must have hunkered into tree chambers or rock nooks, latching themselves like Velcro, or risk being Wind-Exed to Mexico. Only the rock, sagebrush and pinyon ignored the wind, knowing the whistled tune by heart.

Underfoot, a thin green line turned out to be sub-alpine onion, fresh and pungent. Then, a quick glimpse of a frantic lizard, reacting to our shuffling feet as if we caused a major tremor. A purple flower that I will know the name of the next time I see it. Sometimes we were on a discernable path, but most times we just wandered. Further down the ravine we spotted some lichen pasted to a rock outcrop—a purported synergism of algae and fungus at work. We were not alone.

With deliberate nonchalance, my senior scout led me towards a trace of past civilization—remnants of charcoal mounds blanketed by sand, and what I call 'Kingsford Kitchens'—hand-built rock ovens that pyrotechnically transformed pinyon logs into charcoal briquettes. Back in the 1860s, they 'manufactured' charcoal to feed the smelters at the Cerro Gordo silver mines, several miles to the north.

We break for lunch under a nearby tree well. I inhale my PBJ sandy-wich, while Tom knifes open a can of tuna, sipping the liquid like a fine brandy. Downing bananas for dessert, it's time to start moving again. Tom's 70+ year young frame jumps up and lurches forward like an underweight 40 year-old. We stumble upon the tiny tracks of a solitary deer from a rare muddy moment in desert time. Then we spot a lone coyote's crusty scat. More signs of singles life in this harsh, remote wildness. It's the perfect place to practice abstinence—from almost everything.

We keep moving, the wind now surging us forward from behind, whether we like it or not. I kneel over a rusted, empty steel can with a soldered bottom from over 50 years ago. I'm dreaming cowboy beans. Getting back up, I am completely lost. Tom motions the way and I follow him. You can sense the nothingness, and taste the wilderness.

We leave this no-man's land, but I know that I must come back and see it again for the first time. Go experience Conglomerate Mesa. Enjoy the desert solitude, welcome the wind and leave no trace—not even tuna swampwater. After all, badlands are in the eye of the beholder.

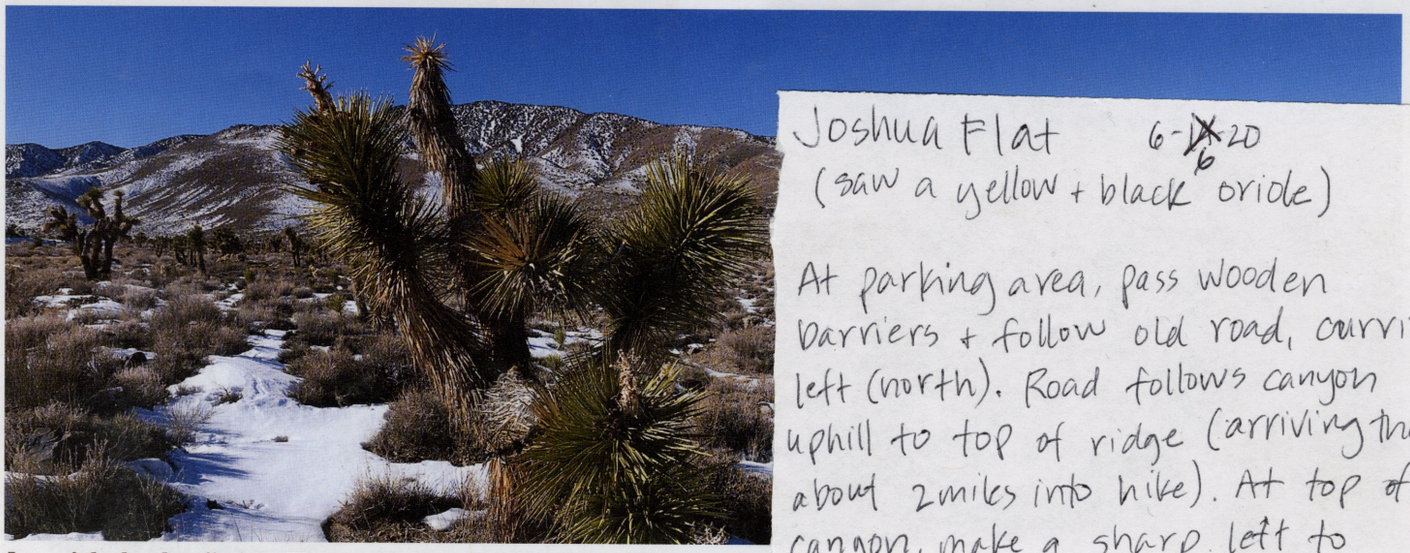
Wano Urbonas is a former FOI staffer now living in Montana.

2011

Exploration

Joshua Flat, Piper Mountains Wilderness

By Todd Vogel



Lay of the land at Joshua Flat.

Some 25 miles east of the town of Big Pine, hiding in plain view off the paved road to Eureka Valley, there is a wonderful basin with a fine selection of day hikes that can be undertaken nearly any month of the year. Many people speed right by Joshua Flat, in the Piper Mountain Wilderness, perhaps on their way to the sand dunes of Eureka Valley, or to Scotty's Castle in Death Valley Park. A few people may slow to watch for Scott's orioles, who are known to nest in the area; few stop to take the time for a stroll.

The higher areas of Joshua Flat surround the trailhead like palisades, guarding but hinting at fantastic views out towards Eureka Dunes, the Inyo Mountains and the Last Chance Range. The flat itself holds a fine example of a Joshua tree woodland. I suppose anyone who has spent time in the forests of the Sierra may object to calling the dense grove of Joshua trees at Joshua Flat a "forest" but hey, it's all relative. For our part of the world, this is about as dense a stand of Joshua trees as you're going to get, at least within a hundred miles! And though there are isolated Joshua trees scattered about here and there to the north, this is one of the northernmost Joshua tree forests in the West.

In many ways Joshua Flat, like Lee, Santa Rosa, and Centennial Flats to the south, serves to remind us how our designations don't always fit neatly into the boxes we provide them. All these flats have the signature plant of the Mojave Desert, the Joshua tree, but also have plants and animals more familiar to in the Great Basin desert. It's a classic blend, a dramatic landscape of deserts, valleys and mountains, where fingers of one desert merge with the tendrils of another; there is no sudden demarcation, our boundaries between

Joshua Flat 6-16-20
(saw a yellow + black oriole)

At parking area, pass wooden barriers + follow old road, curving left (north). Road follows canyon uphill to top of ridge (arriving there about 2 miles into hike). At top of canyon, make a sharp left to follow ridge uphill (road is difficult to find at turn). Be looking for views of Eureka Dunes to SE, as well as orange desert lilies. At mile 3, there is an old mining cabin site, deep mine shaft, shallow mine pit, and "dump." Continue past mine toward granite spires to viewpoint (about .2 mile past mine; at 7077') of Deep Springs Valley and White Mountains

Joan + Jeff

GET OUT

Spring 2015

Pat Keyes Trail

Inyo National Forest and Bureau of Land Management

Inyo Mountains Wilderness

The trail starts at 3840' and steeply climbs 3.5 miles to the spring at 7,000'. Another two miles will take you to Pat Keyes Pass at about 9,500'. There are many rewards along the way, but the exhilirating view of the Sierra Nevada to the west is stupendous and well worth the 11 miles out and back.

Photo: Sydney Quinn

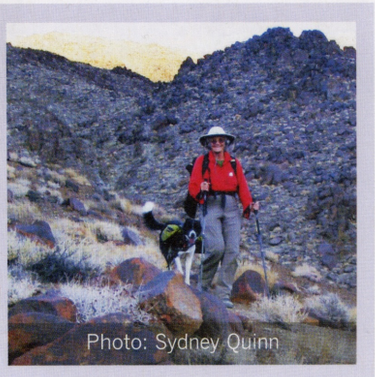
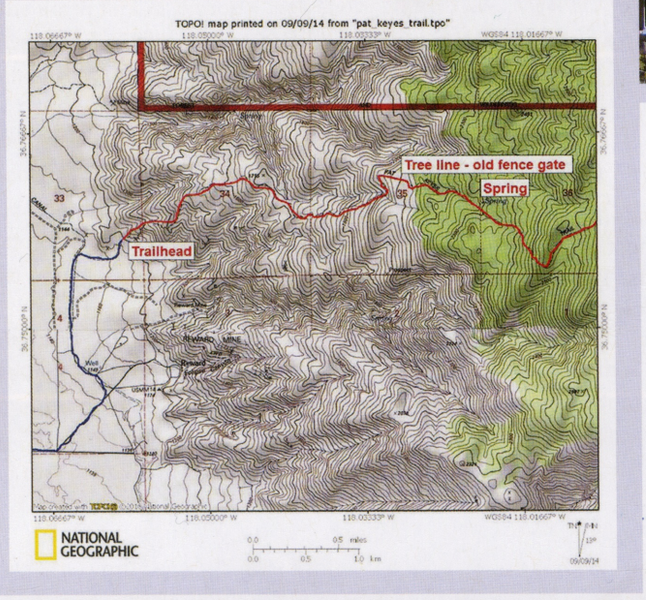


Photo: Sydney Quinn



South of Independence, CA, leave Hwy. 395 and turn east on Manzanar Reward Mine Road 4.7 miles to a junction. Turn left and drive 1.1 miles north to a road junction. An old corral may be visible at the base of the mountains. Turn right and drive east .5 mi. to the trailhead. This follows the blue line on the map. A high clearance vehicle is likely required as the road is not normally maintained.
This hike is usually most comfortable in spring and fall though winter or summer can be quite pleasant.

AREA DESCRIPTION: Managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Inyo National Forest, the Inyo Mountain Wilderness encompasses a large portion of the Inyo Mountains, which rise to 11,000 feet at Keynot Peak and separates the Owens Valley on the west and Saline Valley on the east. These mountains have maintained most of their pristine character due to the sheer ruggedness of the terrain. Evidence of historic and prehistoric man's use of the area has been found. Vegetation includes creosote, shadscale scrub, big sagebrush, lush riparian areas in most of the canyons on the eastern slope and pinyon-juniper woodland, bristlecone and limber pine on the higher reaches. Wildlife include desert bighorn sheep and the Inyo Mountain salamander.

Photo: Dennis Vance

Eastern Sierra Scarp from Chocolate Mountain. (Todd Vogel)

Inyo Mountains Wilderness

2013

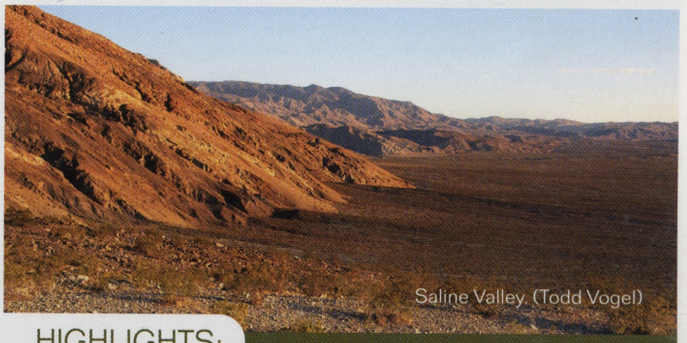
ACREAGE: 198,360 acres

LOCATION: East of Independence and Big Pine, west of Death Valley National Park

MANAGEMENT: Inyo National Forest, Bureau of Land Management

ACCESS: SR 168 (Westgard Pass Road), Mazourka Canyon Road, Saline Valley Road

ACTIVITIES: Rockhounding, exploring old mines, hiking, backpacking



Saline Valley. (Todd Vogel)

HIGHLIGHTS:

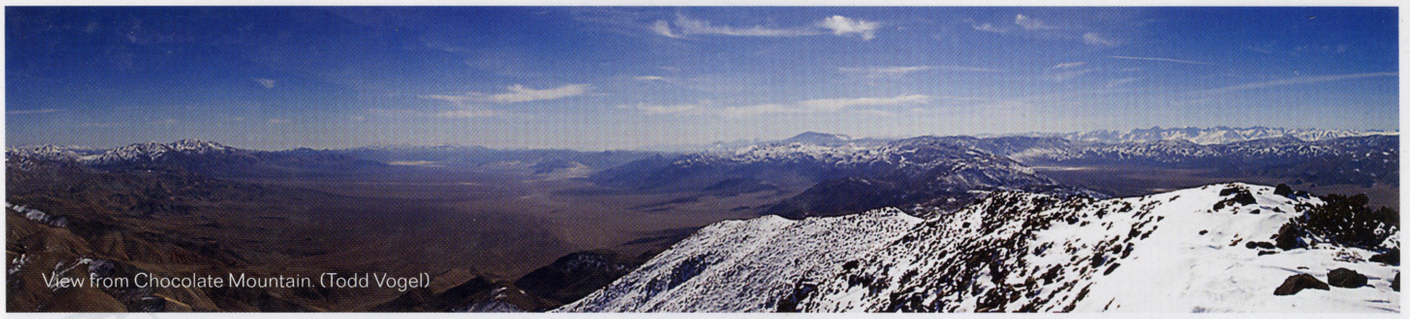
MAZOURKA CANYON, WINNEDUMAH ROCK

The Inyo Mountains Wilderness was created in 1994 and is located on the eastern edge of the Owens Valley, east of Independence and Big Pine and south of Bishop. The short, narrow high-desert range shares its eastern border with Death Valley National Park and separates Saline Valley from the Owens Valley.

The Inyo Mountains are a steep, extremely rugged and isolated desert mountain range. The highest, Keynot Peak, rises to almost 11,000 feet. The Inyos are a relatively unusual mountain range for the region because its eight perennial streams drain from the east side. These slender green threads of life provide safe harbor for a surprisingly large and diverse array of wildlife that can all be found in these riparian "islands in a sea of desert": mule deer, desert bighorn sheep, mountain lions, and even the exotic and rare Inyo Mountain slender salamander. Creosote, shadscale, and sagebrush cover the lower elevations, pinyon and juniper the midlevel slopes, and bristlecone and limber pine dominate the highest peaks.

Mining has played a central role in the rich human history of the Inyo Mountains. The salt deposits left behind eons ago when Saline Valley was a shallow lake were tempting enough for salt miners to build a fantastic tram from the valley floor nearly to the top of the range. The remarkably intact remains of this endeavor and many other mining efforts are still in evidence, scattered across the ridges and draws of the range.

This wilderness is as isolated and hard to reach as any you will find, but a group of intrepid volunteers who love the Inyos have nevertheless managed to carve out and maintain a 40-mile section of trail here, called the Lonesome Miners Trail – a challenging trail that will essentially guarantee a pristine desert mountain adventure.



View from Chocolate Mountain. (Todd Vogel)

Piper Mountain Wilderness

ACREAGE: 72,192 acres

LOCATION: Northeast of Big Pine, west of Death Valley National Park

MANAGEMENT: Bureau of Land Management

ACCESS: SR 168 (Westgard Pass Road), approximately 20 miles north and east of Big Pine

ACTIVITIES: Rockhounding, hiking, backpacking

HIGHLIGHTS: Chocolate Mountain

2013

The Piper, Sylvania, and Inyo Mountains meet in the Piper Mountain Wilderness. The wilderness also forms the upper end of Eureka Valley—the desert valley immediately north of Death Valley National Park. Piper Mountain at 7,546 feet, also called Chocolate Mountain on topographical maps, gives the wilderness its name. The Piper Mountains are a subset of the Inyo range and resemble them in many ways, but they have no perennial streams. When Piper was proposed as wilderness, several rough four-wheel-drive roads were allowed to remain and they divide the wilderness into three sections. All three different areas of the wilderness harbor desert bighorn sheep.

Owens Valley Salamander. (Ceal Klingler)

FAUNA FOCUS:

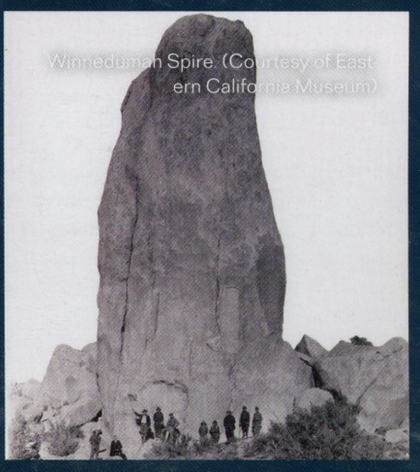
The Slender Salamander

Hidden deep in the knife-edged canyons and draws of the Inyo Mountains is a rare and fragile reminder of the power of water in the desert. Discovered in 1973, the small, lungless Inyo Mountain salamander is one of only a few slender salamander subspecies in California. It is endemic to the small springs and riparian areas of the Inyo and Piper Mountains, where it is confined to only 16 known places. It is a short, stocky salamander with a greenish-brown cast, and because it respires through its skin, it must live in moist areas. The slender salamander is a state-protected species due to its rarity; threats include mining and cattle and wild burro grazing.

LOCAL LORE:

The Story of Winnedumah

High on the crest of the Inyo Mountains east of Independence, a startling 80-foot granite spire known as Winnedumah cuts the ridge line and seems to stand sentry over the Owens Valley. One story holds that thousands of years ago, a Paiute tribe was being chased into the Inyo Mountains by a rival tribe. The tribe's medicine man, Winnedumah, stood at the top of the mountain and began to pray for the salvation of his tribe. Suddenly, he was transformed into the giant monolith and the enemies were swept away. The medicine man stands there today, watching over the valley and modern day tribes.



Winnedumah Spire. (Courtesy of Eastern California Museum)

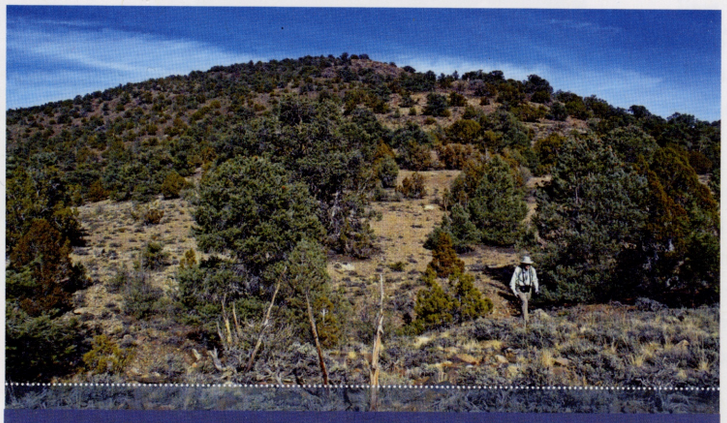
EXPLORATION

Get out!

2016

Exploring the White-Inyo Bridge

North of the Eureka Valley Road lies some of the last unprotected roadless landscapes cradled between the White and Inyo Mountains, a wild place roughly 40,000 acres with elevations ranging from 5,000-8,000 feet. Pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, xeric shrublands, and black brush paint the topography of steep canyons and gentle rolling slopes. This area provides habitat connectivity between the Great Basin and Owens Valley and adjoins the BLM administered Piper Mountain Wilderness to the east. Search for the rare plants of the area including Mojave Fishhook Cactus and Little Cutleaf. Enjoy, but do not disturb the area's many cultural sites ranging from prehistoric house rings to old mining camps.



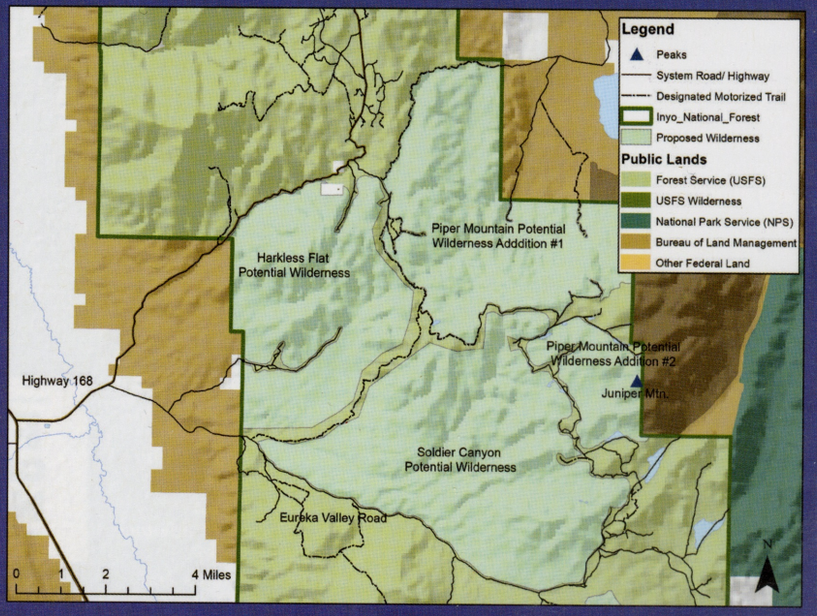
Hiking along Juniper Mountain in the White-Inyo Bridge. Photo: Jora Fogg

Numerous opportunities for exploration of the Solider Canyon potential wilderness area (PWA) and potential Piper Mountain Wilderness additions exist. From the Eureka Valley Road you can walk up Deadman Canyon all the way to 9S109, about five miles. Alternatively, you can walk in from Little Cowhorn Valley along 9S109 or drive in with a high clearance 4WD vehicle. From the road you can look southwest into the Solider Canyon PWA and north-northwest into the Piper Mountain PWA additions. For an extended adventure, leave the road and climb 8,965ft Juniper Mountain to the north. Walk eastward cross-country about 0.8 miles and then climb to the top, another 0.8 miles. Be prepared for a steep climb as the elevation gain is approximately 1,000 feet. From there you will be in the middle of the Piper Mountain 2 PWA and will be able to see most of it as well as much of the surrounding country. To the east you will see the BLM's Piper Mountain Wilderness, to the north you the Piper Mountain potential wilderness addition, and to the southwest a beautiful view of the potential Soldier Canyon wilderness.

Getting There

Head east from Big Pine on Highway 168, then take the Eureka Valley Road southeast towards Death Valley National Park. This road provides access to the heart of the Solider Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. Just after the boundary with the Inyo National Forest and the turn off for 35E421, the Solider Canyon PWA begins to the north. 15,445 acres of canyons and perennial streams lie before you, including the prominent Crooked Road and Deadman Canyons. Water can usually be found during the spring in these canyons, but be sure to carry plenty of water anytime of the year. In the late spring, continue driving east into Little Cowhorn Valley to look among the Joshua trees for singing Cactus Wrens and Scott's Orioles, the northern range for these species.

Get Out! Map of the White-Inyo Bridge



Exploration

My Bucket Overfloweth – Hiking Last Chance Canyon

By Todd Vogel

Last Chance Canyon. (Todd Vogel)

I would like to make a confession: When I was nineteen I drove across Death Valley with a friend and then proclaimed "well, tick Death Valley off the list." We didn't even bother with the north/south road; the shorter east/west route was enough for us. In my mind today, this transgression is right up there with – and perhaps surpasses – the visitors who come to see the park's flowers in a good year and ask the rangers if they have anything besides yellow. Sigh.

I've been repenting ever since. Regardless of how long I live, I've known for awhile now that I'll never see – much less touch or smell – everything I want to in the park. Despite the geometric explosion of my forays to the park's hinterlands over the past dozen years, my Death Valley bucket list seems only to grow longer, as each trip leads to many more additions to the "I gotta go check that place out" list. Each new peak climbed or canyon sauntered discloses a new temptation. Even places I've been many times seen in a different light offer new enticements. So many places virtually toured by map or simulated in Google Earth are only truly revealed with feet on the ground and a pack on the back. Not limited to Death Valley, I call this the Bucket List Expansion Effect (BLEE).

I will take the liberty of assuming the same is true for you. So – Last Chance Canyon is a hike to add to your bucket list and go do. It's doable nearly any time of the year. I'll just give you the bare bones, as Michel Digonnet's books in the Hiking Death Valley series have all the detail necessary. Find your way to Cucomungo Canyon, on the northwest side of the park. From Bishop we usually go via the Eureka-Big Pine Road and then the North Eureka Valley Road, but it's accessible from Fish Lake Valley as well. Most times I've found the dirt road to be fine for two-wheel drive, but as with any desert dirt road worth its waterbars, the road is subject to washing out. Best to check with the park prior to a visit, and adhere to the advice of any signs concerning the condition of the road. Once on Cucomungo, drive east, eventually passing Willow Spring. Park about a half mile east of Willow Spring, where the road bends to the left. There is no turn-out but the road is wide enough.

You might find the old, short jeep rut that heads south towards a pass at the head of the canyon, but following this is not really necessary as the terrain is open and rife with small washes amidst the piñon and Joshua trees. Last Chance Canyon opens expansively from the pass and if all you do is hike to the view and back (about one mile round trip), the drive out would be worth it. With more time and energy to devote to the project of descending into the canyon, the true head of Death Valley, can be done on an old burro trail on the east side of the canyon.

Can a place be known in one visit? How small must a place be to be known in one trip? These are the questions that lead to my overflowing bucket. If you do visit Last Chance, be prepared to add to yours.

Summer Exploration with Mammoth Lakes Basin Interpretive Programs

Hundreds of visitors (and locals, too!) have enjoyed the weekly summer interpretive hikes in the Mammoth Lakes Basin offered by Friends of the Inyo in partnership with the Inyo National Forest. These popular, family-friendly hikes are lead by Lakes Basin Steward Carole Lester and volunteer docents. "It's just a great way to explore and connect with the Inyo National Forest in the Mammoth Lakes area," said Lawson Reif, Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center Manager. This summer's programs included three offerings – a geology hike from Horseshoe to McLeod Lakes, a wildflower walk to Heart Lake, and historical tours of the Mammoth Consolidated Mine and environs. In addition, FOI's first-ever Junior Steward Activity Book was published in June to nicely augment this summer's interpretive programs. The field book helps kids connect with the wild places and creatures of the Lakes Basin with fun activities and information. Big thanks go to Carole Lester, Lori Michelon and Heidi Vetter for lending their talents to this project! – *Catherine Billey*

Landing Strip

2012

Airplane Mesa

Wind Sock

The view coming back down the Seep Hole Trail, showing Independence, in green, in the Owens Valley. Photo by Dennis Vance

11-3-2012

An Inyo Mountain adventure

Hike turns up chipping field, Seep Hole and Bristlecones

By Dennis Vance
Special to the Register

The morning of Sept. 14, Perry, Larry and I headed east of Independence on the Mazourka Canyon road to find the trailhead of an old Paiute locale for Pinyon nutting and, to our surprise, the making of tools.

The trail is known as Seep Hole Spring as it leads directly to a high side-hill spring at over 9,000-feet.

Entering the canyon, you realize this canyon does not run east into the Inyo Range, but rather north-south, continuing so for seven miles. Mazourka Road is county maintained due to the anntena stationed at Mazourka Peak. However, once you leave this road it is advised to travel in a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Our trip took us just past Bonanza Gulch with a right-hand turn before Santa Rita Flat. These slopes comprised the Union and Russ mining districts, the first established in Owens Valley.

After three miles on a rough mining road, we arrived at a maintained cabin built years ago next to a well-placed cottonwood tree.

This is a remote hike with no predictable water source. The elevation gain is 3,000 feet, climbing to 9,000 feet.

Maps do not give this canyon a name, so I will call it by the Paiute's designation: Seep Hole Canyon.

We set off up the trail around 8 a.m. The trail begins an incline and continues so for the entire ascent.

I was amazed at how well defined the trail actually was since it is rarely hiked other than by locals.

At 7,500-feet elevation, we entered into the Pinyon-Juniper woodland of the Inyos. These trees are well adapted for the hot and arid climate here.

Eventually the switchbacks leveled out and we entered a flat plain. The hike became very enjoyable at this point as we were anticipating seeing the spring and the view of the Saline Valley to the east.

Surprisingly, we came across Bristlecones; I thought they were confined to the White Range further north and at a higher elevation.

Further on we came to a small flat playa and realized there were no animal tracks or human prints due to the recent rain three weeks ago.

We were standing in the middle of a Paiute "chipping field" where they would fashion arrowheads and other tools. Colors ran from black, red, green, carmel and white.

Pine nutting was a tradition here as well.

We found the Seep Hole, what appeared to be a crude water tank as well as an old camp site under a huge Utah Juniper with a steel pot wedged in the trunk.

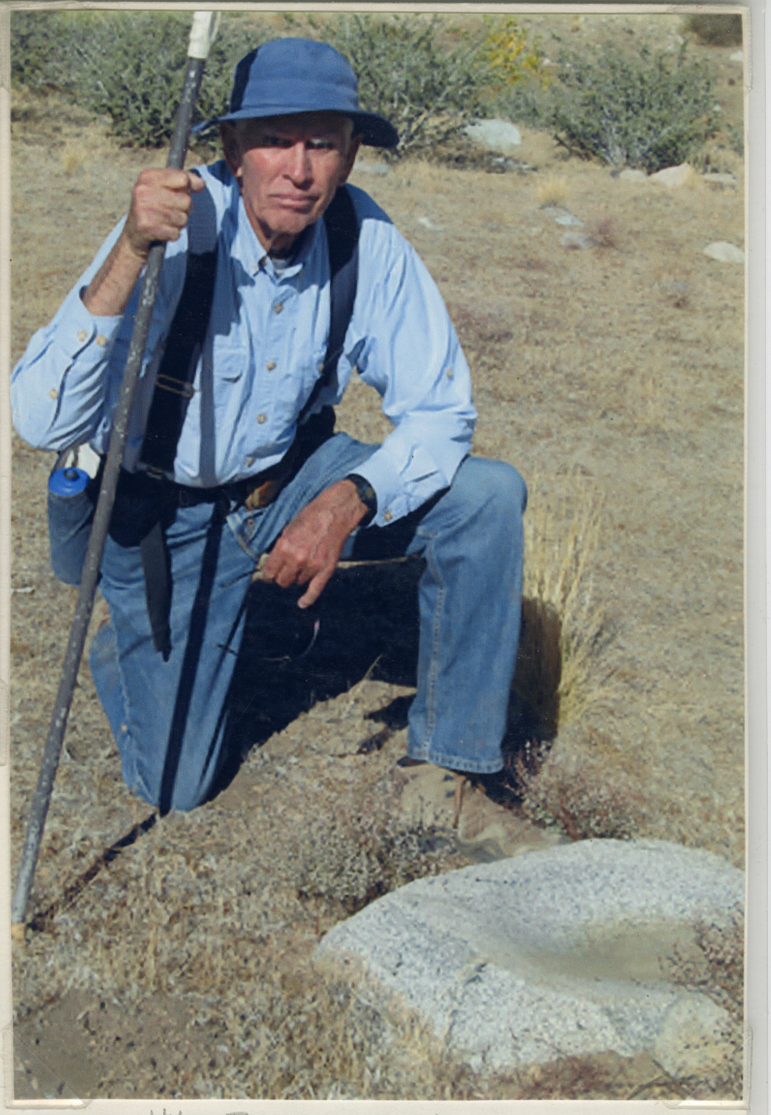
All in all, a great hike with perfect weather: eight hours hiking, covering approximately 12 miles round trip with a gain of more than 3,000-feet.

2010 HARKLESS FIAT

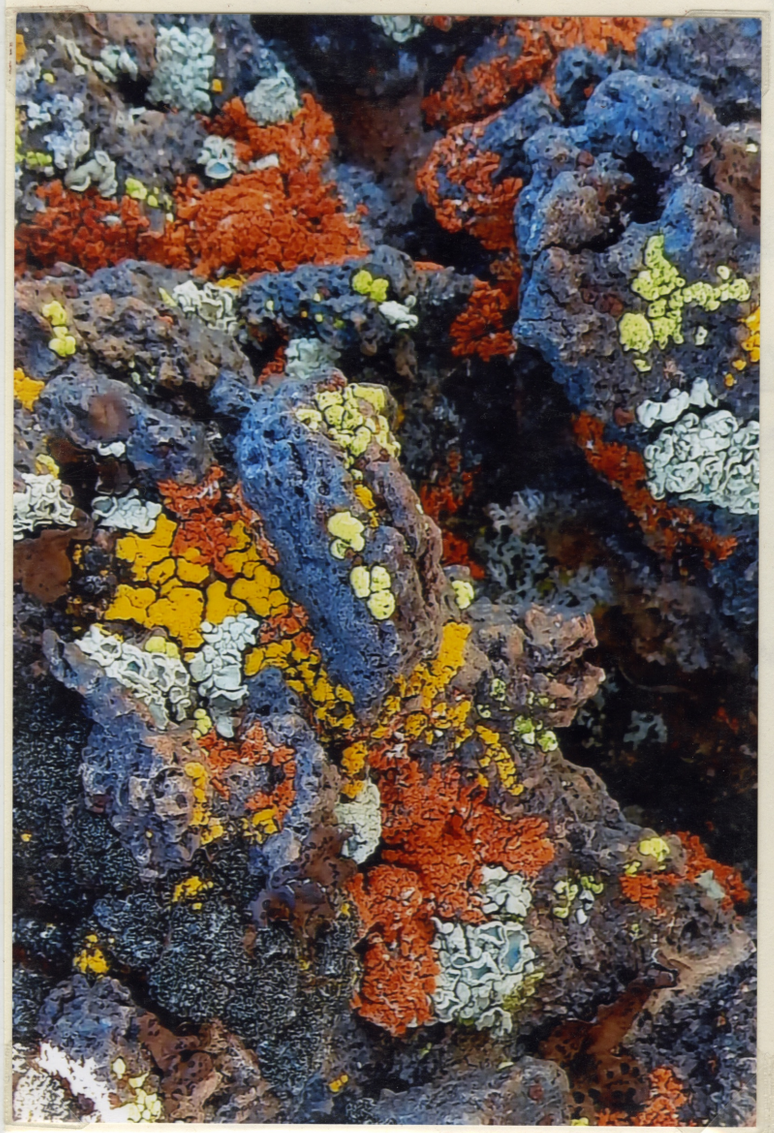
J+R MINING
04-5-08
05-15-04
08-11-01

INYO MTNS 2015

BUTLER RANCH AREA



Little Pine Creek



INYO MTNS.

Birch poles used to Harvest Pinyon cones

2015 Garden Rock

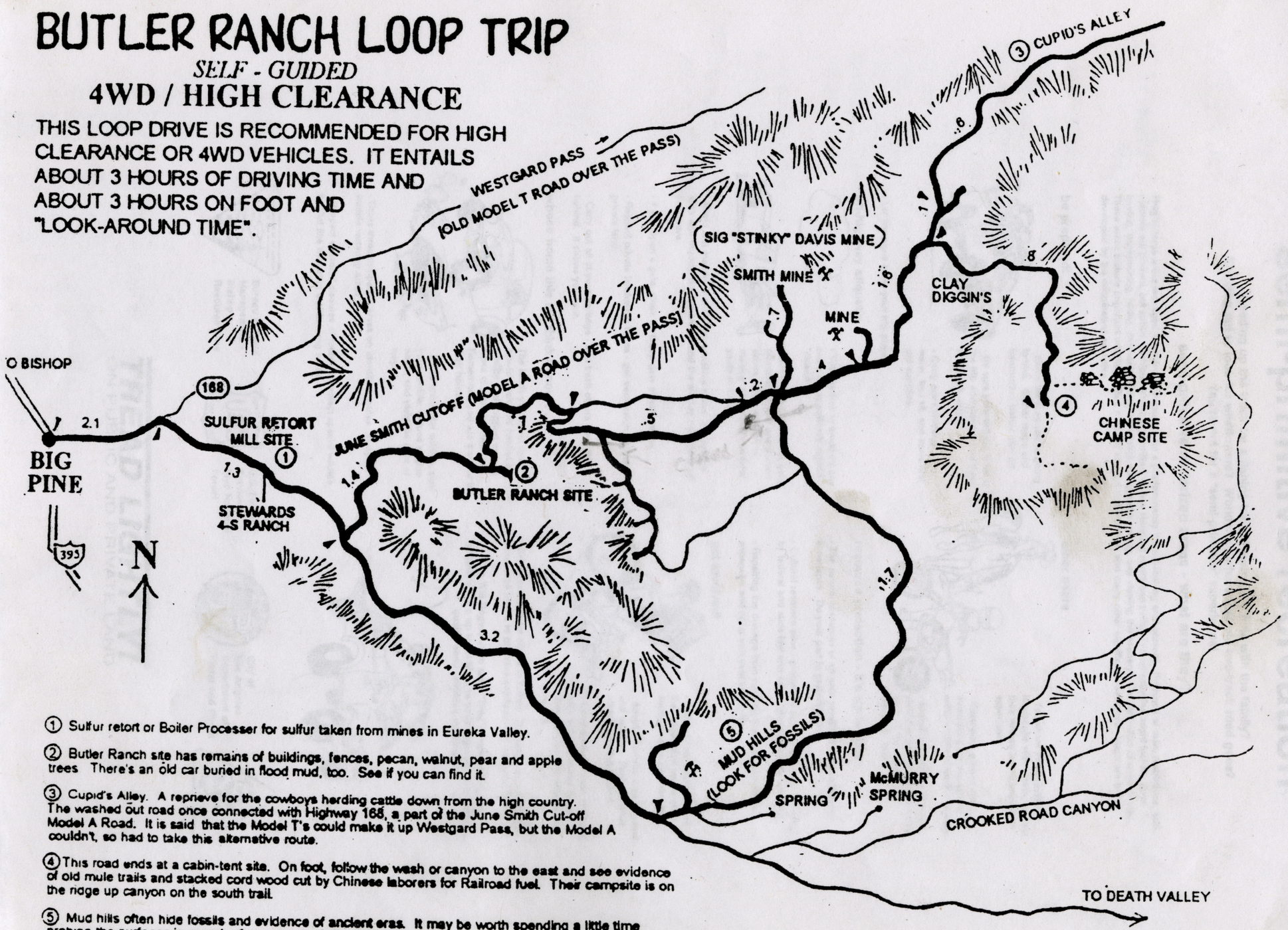
upper Pinyon house

BUTLER RANCH LOOP TRIP

SELF - GUIDED

4WD / HIGH CLEARANCE

THIS LOOP DRIVE IS RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH CLEARANCE OR 4WD VEHICLES. IT ENTAILS ABOUT 3 HOURS OF DRIVING TIME AND ABOUT 3 HOURS ON FOOT AND "LOOK-AROUND TIME".



① Sulfur retort or Boiler Processer for sulfur taken from mines in Eureka Valley.

② Butler Ranch site has remains of buildings, fences, pecan, walnut, pear and apple trees. There's an old car buried in flood mud, too. See if you can find it.

③ Cupid's Alley. A reprieve for the cowboys herding cattle down from the high country. The washed out road once connected with Highway 168, a part of the June Smith Cut-off Model A Road. It is said that the Model T's could make it up Westgard Pass, but the Model A couldn't, so had to take this alternative route.

④ This road ends at a cabin-tent site. On foot, follow the wash or canyon to the east and see evidence of old mule trails and stacked cord wood cut by Chinese laborers for Railroad fuel. Their campsite is on the ridge up canyon on the south trail.

⑤ Mud hills often hide fossils and evidence of ancient eras. It may be worth spending a little time probing the surfaces in search of a remnant of the past.

Big Pine Chamber of Commerce P.O.Box 23 Big Pine, CA 93513 619-938-2114

WIN CARTER, BETTY CARTER & DWAYNE ROSSI

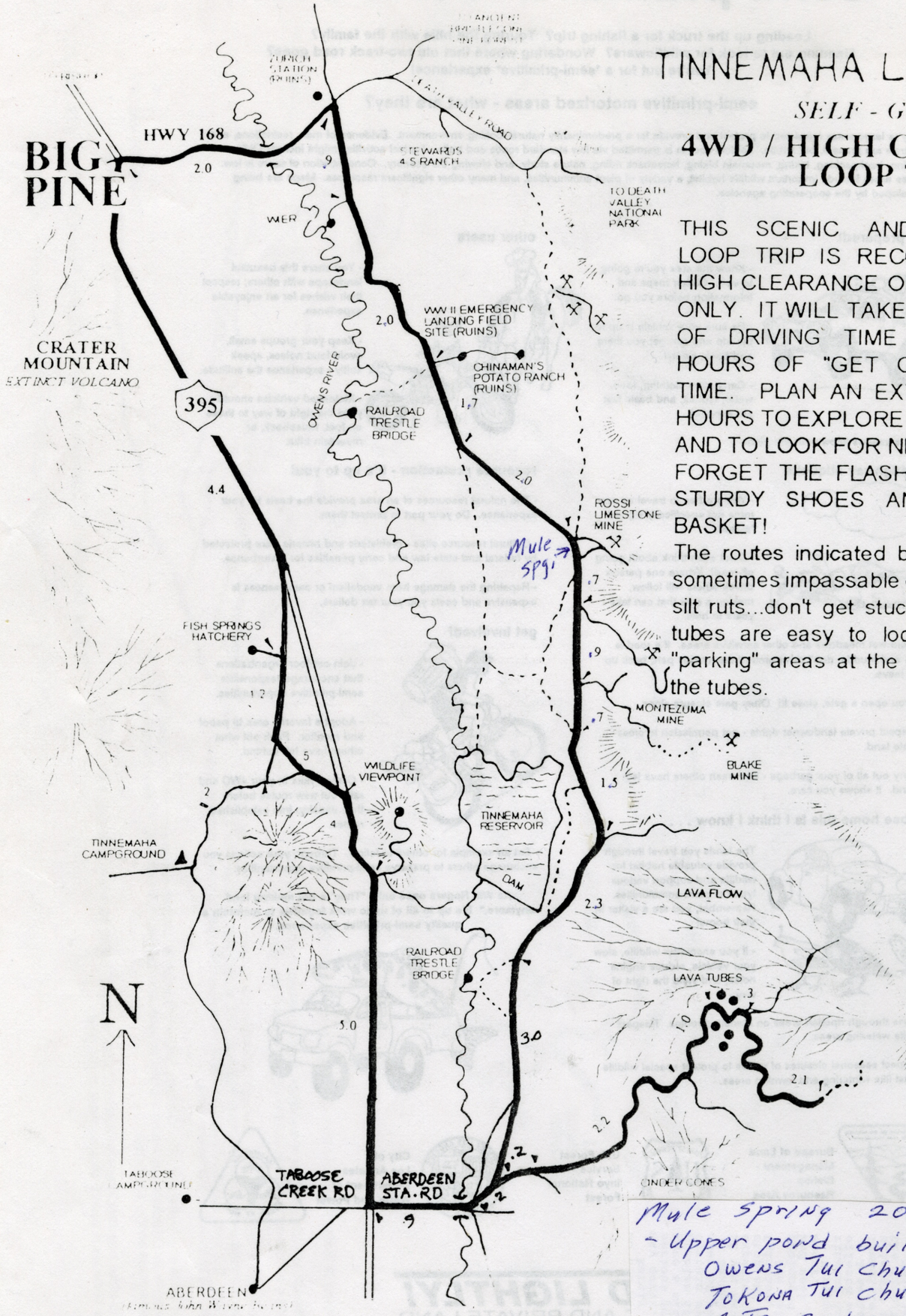
TINNEMAHA LAVA FLOW

SELF - GUIDED

4WD / HIGH CLEARANCE LOOP TRIP

THIS SCENIC AND EDUCATIONAL LOOP TRIP IS RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH CLEARANCE OR 4WD VEHICLES ONLY. IT WILL TAKE ABOUT 3 HOURS OF DRIVING TIME AND ABOUT 2 HOURS OF "GET OUT AND LOOK" TIME. PLAN AN EXTRA COUPLE OF HOURS TO EXPLORE THE LAVA TUBES AND TO LOOK FOR NEW ONES. DON'T FORGET THE FLASHLIGHT, CAMERA, STURDY SHOES AND THE PICNIC BASKET!

The routes indicated by dotted lines are sometimes impassable due to deep mud or silt ruts...don't get stuck! The main lava tubes are easy to locate as there are "parking" areas at the roadsides nearest the tubes.



Big Pine Chamber of Comm

Map by,
Win Carter
Betty Carter
Dwayne Rossi

Mule Spring 2010
- Upper pond built 1991
  Owens Tui Chub
  Tokona Tui Chub
  Auto Feeder - dawn & Dusk
- Lower pond contains Owens pup Fish
- Metal Kiln, Portland cement for Aquaduct
- Crushed gravel for Carson - Colorado RR

The Archaeology of Pinyon House, Two Eagles, and Crater Middens: Three Residential Sites in Owens Valley, Eastern California.
Robert L. Bettinger. New York: Book Review

Pinyon House (no trinomial provided) is located at an elevation of 2,195 m. (7,200 ft.) in the Inyo Mountains on the eastern side of Owens Valley on the edge of the Pinyon Woodland plant community. The site consists of structural remains (two standing structures, five rock rings, and seven house depressions) and a scatter of surface artifacts spread over an area of 135 x 120 m. Two additional small loci are thought to be functionally related to the site and consist of an artifact scatter and three structures 200 m. to the south and another surface scatter 100 m. to the north. In the absence of any significant depth to the deposit, eight of the 17 identified structures were excavated, and extensive surface collections were undertaken. This recovery effort yielded 66 typeable projectile points, 42 milling implements, 66 ceramic artifacts, numerous flaked stone tools, and several miscellaneous artifacts (incised slate, shell beads, bone tools, etc.) in smaller numbers. Of particular interest are several historical artifacts including a wooden cone paddle, a composite wooden pinyon hook, enamelware, various metal cans, glass buttons, Levi-Strauss clothing fasteners, and the remains of three bottles.

Chronologically, Pinyon House appears to have been occupied over a period of approximately 5,000 years based on obsidian hydration, radiocarbon analyses, and artifact types. There were two radiocarbon assessments, one from a pinyon beam in Structure 1 (1,630 ± 80 r.c.y. B.P.; UCR-1108), and another from a beam in Structure 3 (440 ± 80 r.c.y. B.P.; UCR-1107). Obsidian hydration readings range from 6.3 ± 0.4 to 1.2 ± 0.1 microns that Bettinger calculates to be equivalent to calendric dates from 2,261 B.C. to A.D. 1821 (see discussion below). Based on artifact frequencies, the main occupation is believed to have been between A.D. 300 and 1930.

The Two Eagles site (no trinomial provided) is located at an elevation of 1,524 m. (5,000 ft.) within a Desert Scrub plant community. It consists of 28 rock structures and a surface artifact assemblage covering 8,400 m.^{2}. Like Pinyon House, the distribution of cultural remains is largely horizontal rather than vertical, with the deposit being only a few centimeters in depth. A total of 13 of the 28 rock structures was excavated, and 43 15-m.^{2} surface units were collected. Three of the structures contained hearths, but remains of posts were absent. The artifacts recovered include 244 milling implements, 43 typeable projectile points (two Elko, 14 Rose Spring, 13 Cottonwood Triangular, and 12 Desert Side-notched points), core tools, debitage, and a small number of faunal remains (n = 212). Flotation analysis revealed the presence of muhly seeds (*Muhlenbergia* sp.) that would have been available for collection and consumption from July to November. The chronology for this site is based on obsidian hydration readings and projectile point types, suggesting occupation between 1,200 B.C. and A.D. 1860. Based on these data, the site is believed to have been a short-term seed-processing camp occupied predominately between A.D. 600 and A.D. 1860.

The largest and most complex site of the three investigated by Bettinger is Crater Middens (no trinomial provided). It is situated at 1,311 m. (4,300 ft.) along a seasonal stream channel on the floor of the Owens Valley. Like Two Eagles, it is in a Desert Scrub plant community, but water would have been available at either Big Pine Creek within 800 m. or Little Pine Creek 400 m. to the north. The site is 100 x 600 m. in size and consists of five separate loci, designated middens I-V. Culturally-modified soil was present at all loci save Midden I that contained no subsurface deposit. Surface features include bedrock milling features and 17 rock rings, 14 of which were interpreted as house rings.

The artifact yield from Crater Midden was the greatest of the three sites under study. Next to debitage (n = 54,760), milling equipment was the most common class of artifact recovered from the site, including 363 metates and 213 manos. Also recovered were cobble hammerstones, ceramics (including Owens Valley "grayware"), 536 bifaces (10 complete), and 223 projectile points, 184 of which were typeable. Here Desert Side-notched points were most common (n = 64), followed by Rose Spring points (n = 54), Cottonwood points (n = 49), Elko series points (n = 8) and Humboldt (n = 3). Historical artifacts include glass trade beads and two glass flake "tools." Ecofacts include 7,657 pieces of bone (with *Lepus californicus* being the most common identified animal) and 42 species of identified seeds from flotation samples, including Indian rice grass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*), blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) and blazing star (*Mentzelia congesta*). Seasonal implications based on the floral remains are that this site was most frequently occupied from May to October.

Chronological indicators of period of site use include radiocarbon assessments (corrected to A.D. 30 to A.D. 1500), obsidian hydration (interpreted as 500 B.C. to A.D. 1821), and projectile points, the majority of which (80%) postdate A.D. 1300 according to Bettinger's scheme. The overall temporal range of occupation appears to span from A.D. 1 to the historic period. The site is interpreted as a multi-function site that was occupied year-round with middens II and III acting as places of residence, plant processing, and stone tool manufacturing and maintenance. Midden I may have served as an occasional residence, perhaps during ritual seclusion (menstrual huts?), while middens IV and V show minimal use similar to middens II and III.

He offers a hypothetical Crater Middens subsistence-settlement system where the Crater Midden site serves as a permanent, central habitation area occupied year-round by 30 individuals (six families). Areas outside the Crater Middens catchment zone would be visited on a seasonal basis and would result in the development of temporary camps (such as Two Eagles, 11 km. northeast of Crater Middens). Pinyon camps such as Pinyon House represent short-term, resource-specific camps that probably were occupied four to ten weeks at a time until the end of the pinyon harvest.

Pinyon House. The following is taken from Bettinger (1989). In 1978-79 during the second phase of the Owens Valley Project an upland pinyon camp was excavated. Named Pinyon House because of a standing aboriginal structure, the site is located on a small ridge at an elevation of 2195 m. It is just south of Highway 168, the route over Westgard Pass, and so in the Inyo Mountains portion of the Inyo-White Range. There are no water sources nearby. The site contained two standing structures, a mountain house and a wind-break, along with rock rings and depressions marking collapsed structures. Roasting features, post molds, and hearths were found inside some of the structures. A pecked and incised petroglyph panel, bedrock milling stations (slicks), a rock dam across a gully interpreted as a snow trap, enigmatic pecked rock features, flaked stone tools and debitage, manos, a pestle and hammerstone, Owens Valley Brownware sherds, projectile points, a slate pendant, four incised stones, worked bone, olivella shell beads and bone beads, red ochre, quartz crystals, pinyon hooks, a cone paddle, and historic period artifacts were also found.

Morphologically defined projectile point types found include one Humboldt, one Little Lake, four Elkos, 19 Rose Spring, 16 Cottonwoods, and 24 Desert Side-notched. Plant macrofossils found were nuts, nut hulls and cone scales of *Pinus*, assumed to be P. *monophylla*, and seeds of *Phacclis* spp., *Eriogonum* sp. and *Atriplex* sp.

Radiocarbon assays, obsidian hydration, and time sensitive artifacts were used to date the features. And early occupation, dated from 3000 B.C. to A.D. 300 is indicated by the Little Lake and Elko series projectile points, along with some of the hydration readings from obsidian debitage. The rock art panel may date to this period. There is nothing to suggest that intensive pinyon procurement was an activity during this time. The main period of occupation is dated from A.D. 300 to A.D. 1930. In contrast to the earlier period, pinyon exploitation is indicated, along with other activities. The earliest radiocarbon date, A.D. 300 +/- 225 is from structure 2, which appears to be a substantial structure, possibly a mountain house. This could indicate a slightly earlier beginning of pine nut exploitation than A.D. 600. It certainly demonstrates a long continuity of use at an apparently ephemeral, seasonal camp.

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During recent research in Owens Valley, eastern California, well-preserved aboriginal wood structures (Fig. 1) were found at two sites. The unusual degree of preservation of these dwellings permitted certain interesting observations about their configuration and construction not ordinarily possible in archaeological contexts. Both sites are located in the Inyo Mountains, which form the southeastern boundary of Owens Valley, and both lie within the historic territory of the Owens Valley Paiute (Steward 1933:235-236). One site, Pinyon House (designated C-3x-I), is situated on a relatively flat, northeast-southwest trending ridge on the western slope of the range. The other, Juniper Village (C-58-5), is situated on a north-south trending ridge on the eastern slope of the range. Both sites are identified as winter camps.

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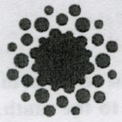

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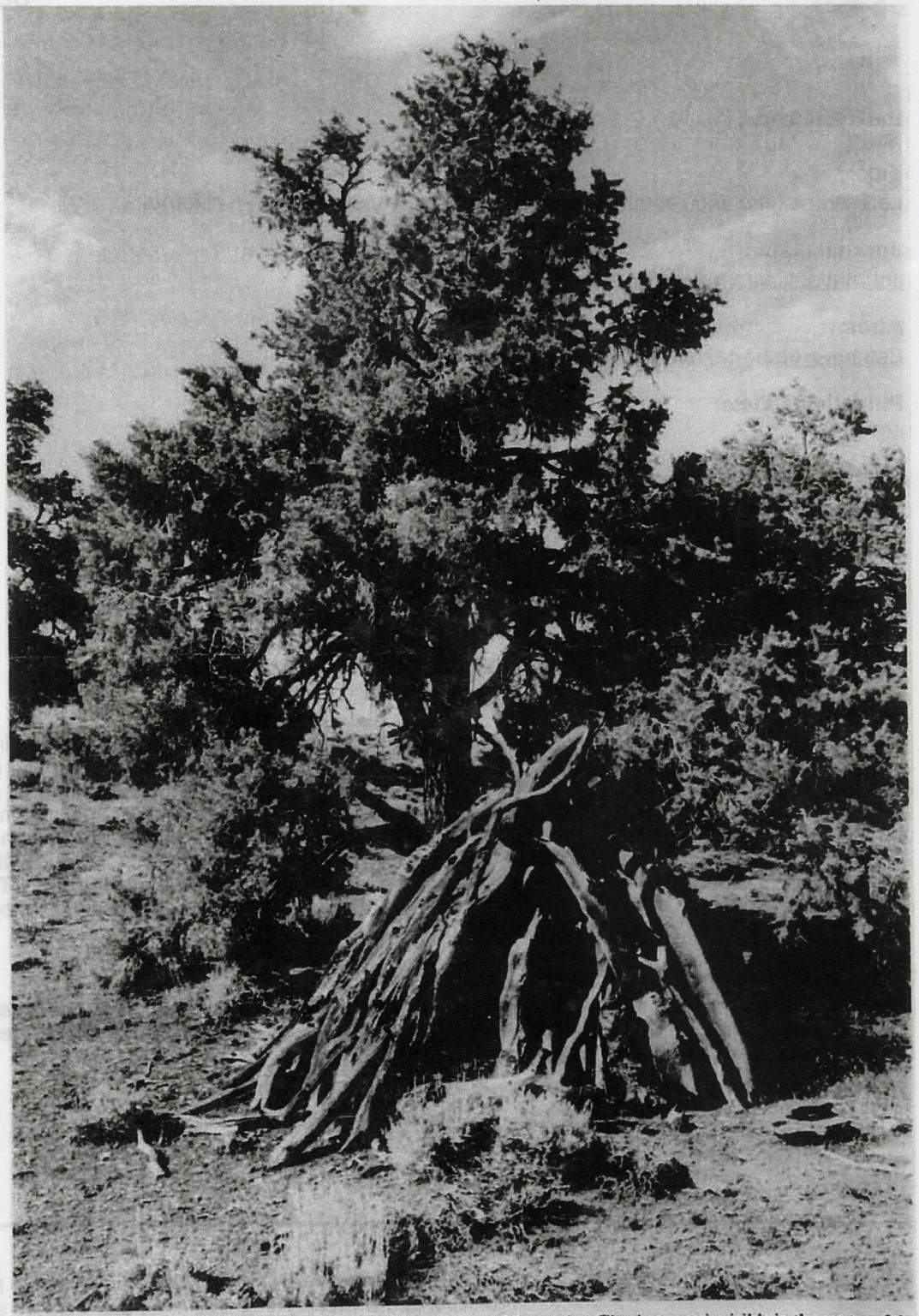

Fig. 1. Conical wood structure at the Pinyon House site, Inyo Mountains. The doorway is visible in the center of the structure, and a millingstone cache can be seen at the right edge of the structure. View is to the south.

Late Prehistoric and Historic Structures in Owens Valley, Eastern California

ROBERT L. BETTINGER

During recent research in Owens Valley, eastern California, well-preserved aboriginal wood structures (Fig. 1) were found at two sites. The unusual degree of preservation of these dwellings permitted certain interesting observations about their configuration and construction not ordinarily possible in archaeological contexts. Both sites are located in the Inyo Mountains, which form the southeastern boundary of Owens Valley, and both lie within the historic territory of the Owens Valley Paiute (Steward 1933:235-236). One site, Pinyon House (designated C-3x-1), is situated on a relatively flat, northeast-southwest trending ridge on the western slope of the range. The other, Juniper Village (C-58-5), is situated on a north-south trending ridge on the eastern slope of the range.[1] Both sites are identified as winter camps.

PINYON HOUSE SITE

The Pinyon House site is relatively small, its 100 m.[2] surface marked by sparse obsidian debitage and one Cottonwood Triangular projectile point (Lanning 1963). A conical wood structure (Fig. 1) is the major feature at the site. It consists of 30-40 large pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*) limbs and trunks arranged in a circle and leaning inward over a shallow depression, forming a cone 2 m. in height and 2 m. in diameter. Structural support is provided by an internal upright set off-center toward the east, and about five large perimeter beams interlocking at the apex of the cone, with the remaining beams resting against these members. Many of the beams exhibit ax-cuts at their proximal ends; some were further prepared by removing the smaller secondary limbs, particularly those projecting inside the structure. No evidence of a bough or thatch covering was observed. At present, the structure exhibits two openings, one on the north and one on the south, that may represent doors; but, it is likely that the southern opening is a recent wall collapse rather than a true doorway. A cache of millingstones was found adjacent to the structure on the west side of the northern opening.[2] It comprises a stack of 3 slab millingstones made of a local shale and a broken glass bottle with a seamless lip (Fig. 2). Most of the bottle fragments lay adjacent to the millingstones, but some were found lodged between them.

Two saucer-shaped depressions of about the same size as the one associated with the standing structure, but lacking wood superstructures, were also noted at the Pinyon House site. These may be the remnants of conical structures, but might also represent semi-subterranean pinyon caches of the type described by Steward (1933:242). Both depressions lacked artifacts.

Two other interesting artifacts noted at the

Fig. 2. Millingstone cache next to structure at Pinyon House site. Note glass bottle fragments to right of millingstones. The largest millingstone measures about 35 cm. in length.

Pinyon House site are a pair of birch (*Betula occidentalis*) poles, each about 3 m. long and 3 cm. in diameter. One of these, found resting in the crotch of a pinyon tree, is composite, consisting of a 1 m. distal element and a 2 m. proximal element lashed together with a leather thong; the other, found at the foot of the same tree, consists of a single limb. There can be little doubt that these are pinyon gathering poles, implements which frequently have a distal hook and are used in the harvest of pinyon cones (Steward 1933:242). Neither of the poles exhibits a distal crook, and no hooked examples were observed in the vicinity of the site.

JUNIPER VILLAGE SITE

The Juniper Village site is somewhat larger than the Pinyon House site, covering about 400 m.[2] The site exhibits the remnants of four circular structures varying in size and state of preservation. The best preserved is Feature 1 (Fig. 3), a standing conical wood structure about 2 m. tall and 3 m. in diameter comprising about 30 badly decayed juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) beams arranged in a circle over a shallow depression and resting against an upright center post. There is no apparent doorway, but it would be a simple matter to move one or two of the beams aside, making an opening large enough to permit entry or exit. At least one, and possibly two, millingstones are visible resting against the wall inside the structure. As with the structure at Pinyon House, no evidence of a thatch covering was found.

Feature 2 is an unusually large depression measuring about 8 m. in diameter and 1.5 m. deep. The sides of the depression are steeply pitched and strewn with decomposed juniper logs which appear to be the remnants of a log superstructure. If a roofed structure is indeed represented, it can be safely assumed to be a communal sweathouse, since this is the only aboriginal structure of comparable size (see Steward 1933:265-266) which one would expect at Paiute villages. No artifacts were found with Feature 2.

Feature 3 is a small, saucer-shaped, log-strewn depression about 2.5 m. in diameter exhibiting what appears to be parts of a collapsed log framework. It probably represents the remnants of a conical structure similar to Feature 1, but of slightly smaller dimensions. Feature 3 lacked associated artifacts.

Feature 4 is a rock ring 3 m. in diameter and lacking a depression or associated artifacts. It is unclear whether it represents a former conical wood structure or a surficial pinyon cache.

In addition to the above features, a small oxidized area was noted on the western portion of the site that may represent a cooking or heating fire.

Among the relatively few artifacts recovered at the Juniper Village site were 5 ob-

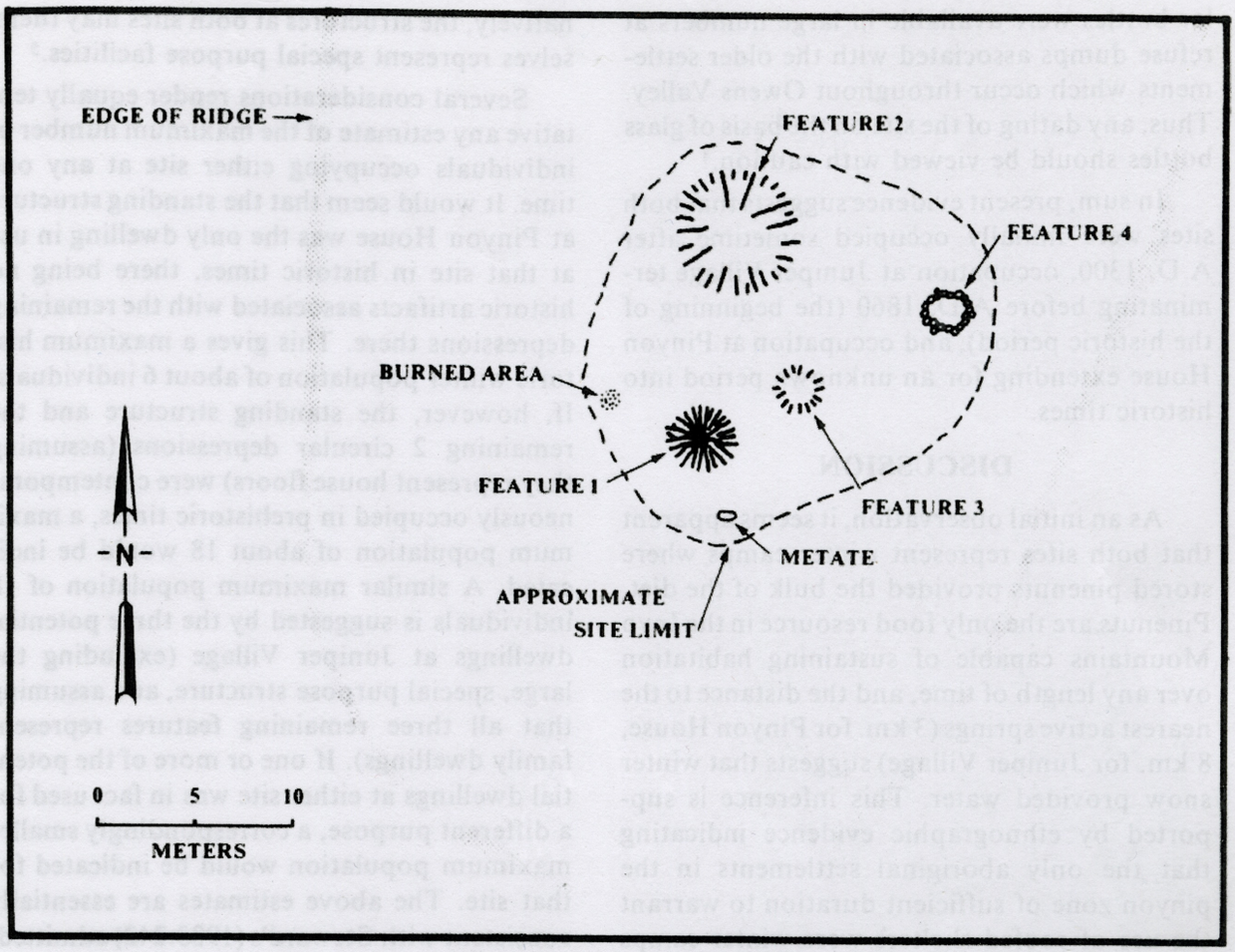

Fig. 3. Map of the Juniper Village site.

sidian projectile points; two are typed as Desert Side-notched (Baumhoff and Byrne 1959), and three as Cottonwood Triangular. In addition, 1 millingstone, 2 bifacially flaked obsidian knife fragments, and 8 pieces of obsidian debitage were recovered from the site surface.

DATING OF THE SITES

Both sites can be dated by means of the time-sensitive projectile points they contain, and by the presence or absence of historic artifacts. Cottonwood Triangular points, found at both Pinyon House and Juniper Village sites, and Desert Side-notched points, found at Juniper Village site, both date to the interval between A.D. 1300 and the historic period in Owens Valley (Bettinger and Taylor 1974), placing the initial occupation of both sites within this time span.[3] The absence of any historic artifacts at Juniper Village would seem to place its terminal occupation prior to white contact, since historic sites typically exhibit numerous items of European manufacture. The glass bottle and ax-cut timbers clearly place the terminal occupation at the Pinyon House site sometime in the historic period. Glass bottles with seamless necks like the one found at Pinyon House were made no later than A.D. 1920 (although most of them date prior to A.D. 1910), providing a possible terminal date for the site (Lorrain 1968); but, it should be pointed out that until recently, simi-

lar bottles were available in large numbers at refuse dumps associated with the older settlements which occur throughout Owens Valley. Thus, any dating of the site on the basis of glass bottles should be viewed with caution.[4]

In sum, present evidence suggests that both sites were initially occupied sometime after A.D. 1300, occupation at Juniper Village terminating before A.D. 1860 (the beginning of the historic period), and occupation at Pinyon House extending for an unknown period into historic times.

DISCUSSION

As an initial observation, it seems apparent that both sites represent winter camps where stored pinenuts provided the bulk of the diet. Pinenuts are the only food resource in the Inyo Mountains capable of sustaining habitation over any length of time, and the distance to the nearest active springs (3 km. for Pinyon House, 8 km. for Juniper Village) suggests that winter snow provided water. This inference is supported by ethnographic evidence indicating that the only aboriginal settlements in the pinyon zone of sufficient duration to warrant the use of roofed shelters were winter camps established in years when the pinyon crop was too large to transport to permanent villages on the valley floor (Steward 1933:242).

Inferences about the size of the aboriginal populations using these sites are less certain. With respect to the two standing structures, their limited floor space, roughly 3 m.^{2} for the example at Pinyon House, and perhaps 7 m.^{2} for the one at Juniper Village would seem to indicate they were inhabited by no more than a single nuclear family of about 4-6 individuals. The meager floor space which would have been available for each individual if the above figures are correct suggests that cooking and other household activities were probably carried out in the open, or perhaps in a separate facility, the structures being reserved for sleeping, as described by Steward (1933:263). Alternatively, the structures at both sites may themselves represent special purpose facilities.[5]

Several considerations render equally tentative any estimate of the maximum number of individuals occupying either site at any one time. It would seem that the standing structure at Pinyon House was the only dwelling in use at that site in historic times, there being no historic artifacts associated with the remaining depressions there. This gives a maximum historic winter population of about 6 individuals. If, however, the standing structure and the remaining 2 circular depressions (assuming they represent house floors) were contemporaneously occupied in prehistoric times, a maximum population of about 18 would be indicated. A similar maximum population of 18 individuals is suggested by the three potential dwellings at Juniper Village (excluding the large, special purpose structure, and assuming that all three remaining features represent family dwellings). If one or more of the potential dwellings at either site was in fact used for a different purpose, a correspondingly smaller maximum population would be indicated for that site. The above estimates are essentially consistent with Steward's (1933:242) admittedly vague discussion of population size at mountain winter camps.

Overall, the tentative settlement reconstruction presented here is strikingly similar to Steward's (1933) ethnographic description of Paiute pinyon zone winter camps in terms of occupying group size, season of use, and even the tools employed. The greatest discrepancy regards the construction of dwellings, which may reflect error on the part of Steward or his Paiute informants, or perhaps an actual post-contact shift in house construction. Although the parallels between the ethnographic accounts and the prehistoric pattern reconstructed here are not unexpected, given their temporal proximity, they tend to validate the approach taken by archaeologists who have drawn heavily on Steward's accounts in inter-

preting Great Basin prehistory.

Finally, although it is surprising that relatively intact aboriginal structures exist at all in eastern California, their potential numbers are even more surprising. The archaeological survey which disclosed the two sites discussed here covered less than 4% of a 220 km.^{2} tract of pinyon woodland; simple mathematic calculations are sufficient to suggest that in this region these features may be far more common than previously expected.

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NOTES

1. More precise description of site location is intentionally omitted here since it is scientifically unnecessary and might encourage vandalism.

2. The photographs of Steward (1933), Merriam (1955), and Curtis (1972) all show millingstones and other household implements being stored near the doorways of Paiute dwellings. This supports the interpretation of the northern opening as the original doorway.

3. Owens Valley was first visited by the Walker Party in 1834, and several additional times between 1840-1860. The social and economic impact of these encounters was relatively minimal, however. For example, the amount of trade goods introduced by these expeditions was probably less than that obtained through traditional trans-Sierran trade with Central California groups having access to Spanish and Anglo products long before the Walker Party ever reached Owens Valley. For this reason, I place the beginning of the historic period at 1860, when cattle were first driven into the valley in numbers, and the first white settlements were established, irreversibly changing the aboriginal economic and social patterns. It was probably also at this time that European goods became widely available.

4. An attempt to cross-date a beam section from the structure at Pinyon House with a core sample taken from a living pinyon tree at the site proved unsuccessful, but this avenue of investigation is continuing.

5. The size and construction of the standing structures at both sites are puzzling in view of Steward's (1933:263-265) discussion of Owens Valley Paiute mountain winter houses. The latter are described as oval structures consisting of two uprights supporting a center ridge pole against which side beams were laid, and measuring 6 m. long and 2 m. tall — much larger than either of the structures reported here. Structurally, the present examples bear a greater resemblance to dwellings used in the summer months on the valley floor (Steward 1933:265). These are described as thatched, conical beam, or willow branch structures with an optional center pole, but substantially larger than either of the standing structures encountered, measuring 3 m. in height and 5 m. in diameter. These anomalies lend at least partial support to the notion that the structures under discussion represent something other than family dwellings.

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Photo by Eileen Burger

270-350 years old PINYON House 2011 Bob LARSON

Bob Larson on drag Trail above car

Sierra View

2011

270-350 yrs. old Pinyon House

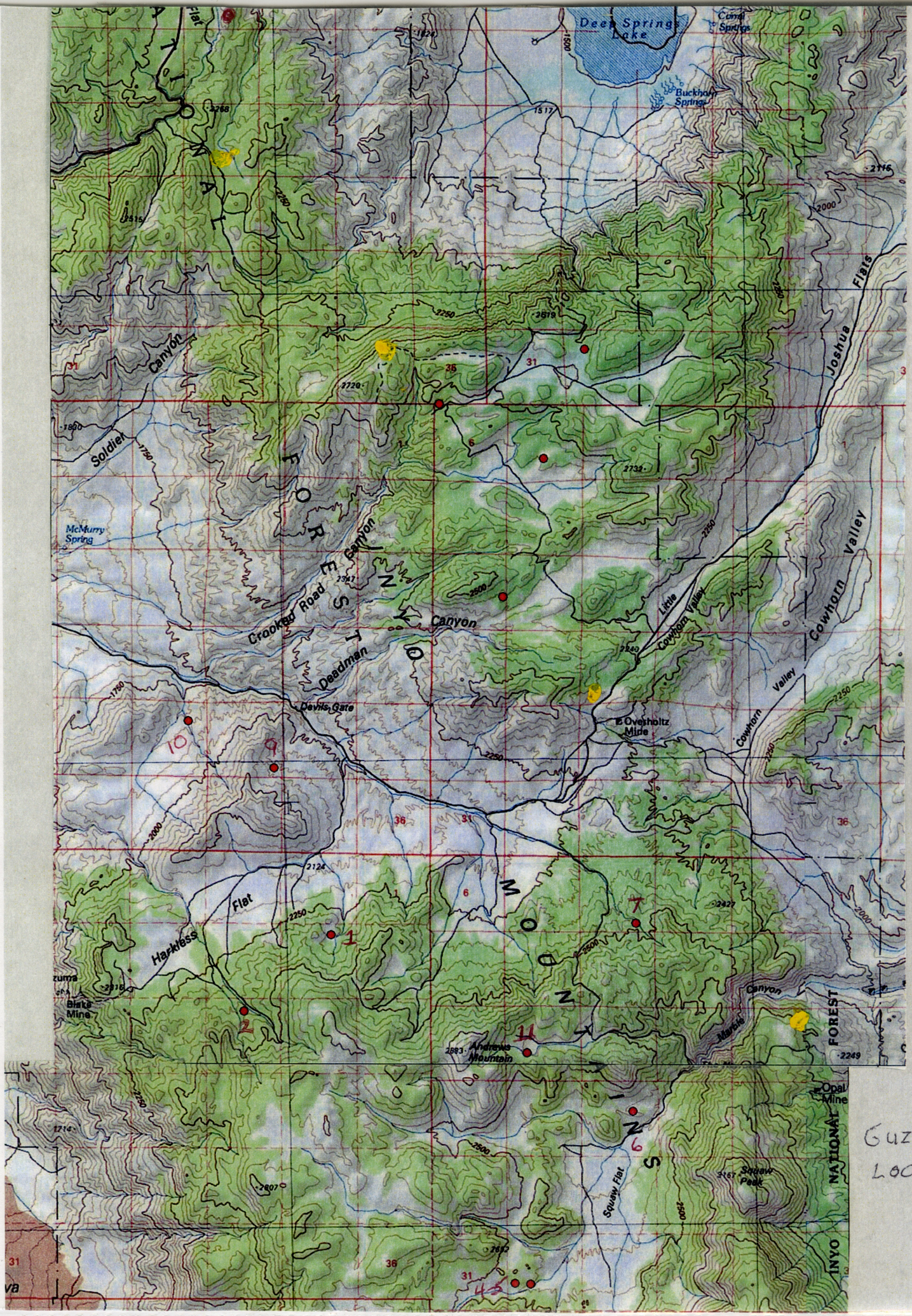
Old time camp

CAVE ROCK

2011

CAVE ROCK

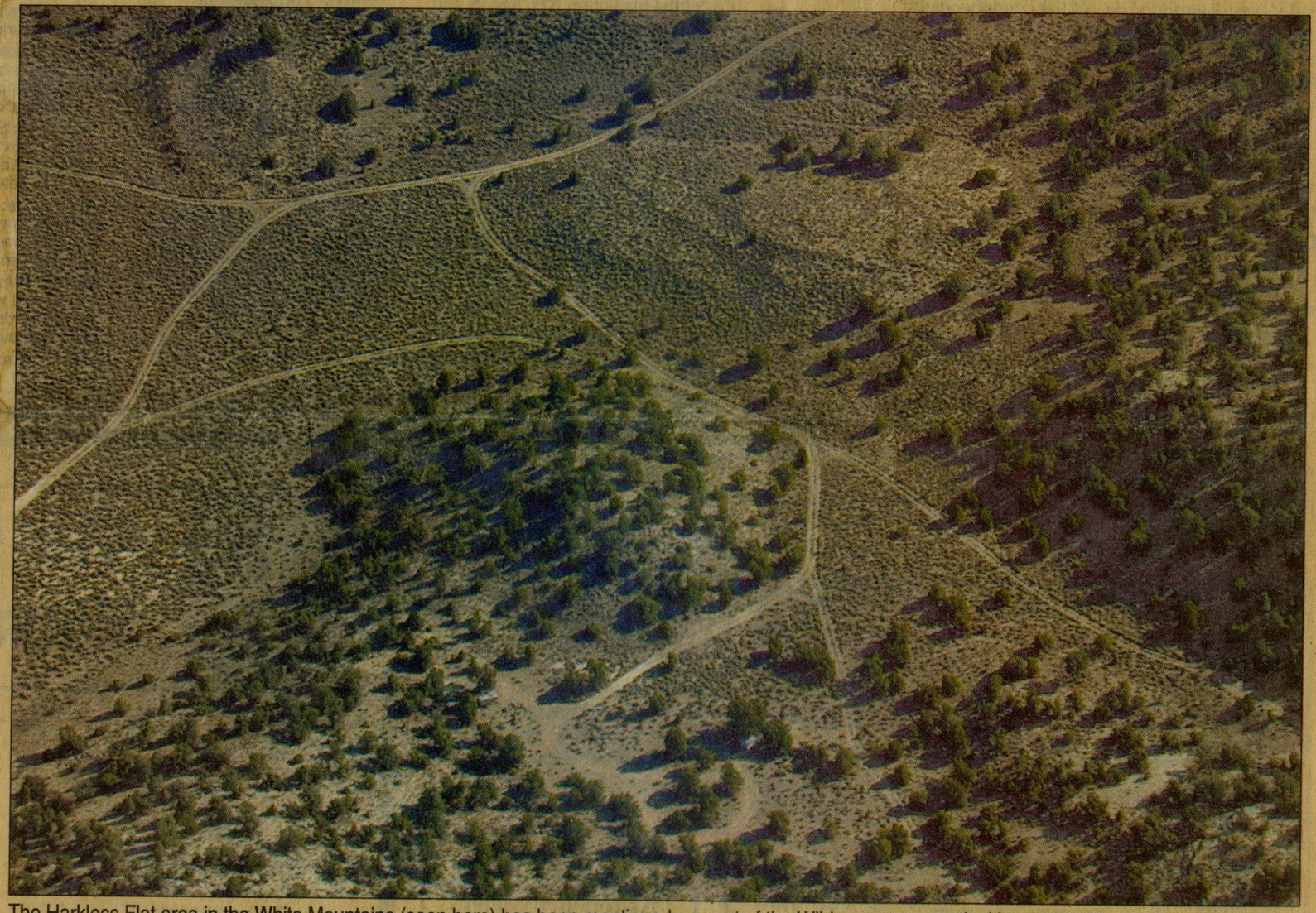
LOWER TRAIL ENTRANCE



GUZZLER LOCATIONS

Guzzler types

LAND ISSUES DEBATED



The Harkless Flat area in the White Mountains (seen here) has been mentioned as part of the Wilderness proposals. However, proponents have explained that the area will reman accessible. *Photo by Brian O'Boyle*

SUV Tour 1
Swansea Grade To Cerro Gordo
4WD MANDATORY

SUV TOURS

Four-wheel drivers can take the road south all the way to George Creek (8 miles), named after a famous Indian Chief. A beautiful grove of old oak trees makes a nice spot to stop and have a snack. An adventurous descent is back down to Manzanar Historical Site, two roads can be found at five and seven miles from the Onion Valley Road. On one of these roads Ansel Adams took his famous shot of Mt. Williamson, while working at the internment camp. At Manzanar, you may encounter some blocked off roads and locked gates. Head north to a road that goes along the northern border of the historic site to access Hwy. 395.

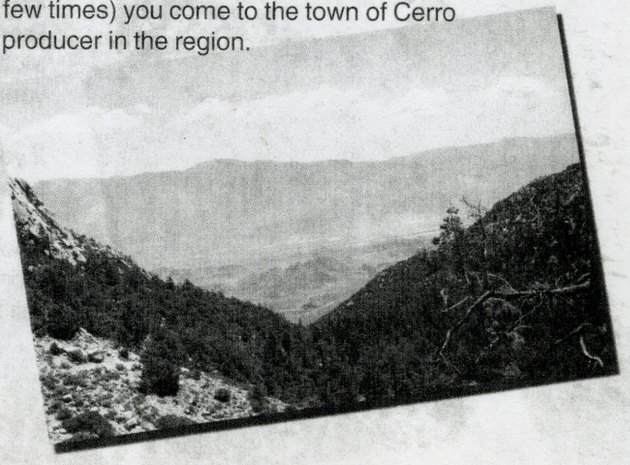
Swansea Grade to Cerro Gordo. This is an all day excursion through rough terrain and remote country. Walking back to civilization could take up to two days. Be Prepared.

South of Lone Pine on Hwy. 395, take Highway 136 to the site of the town of Swansea. In 1872, this would have been a busy place. There was a smelter melting down gold, a wharf leading into Owens Lake, and miners heading off to Cerro Gordo, or Panamint City near Death Valley. In March of that year the Lone Pine earthquake occurred and the western shore of Owens Lake dropped 8 feet. The wharf no longer reached the lake and a new dock and town sprung up at Keeler three miles south. Many structures remained until a devastating debris flow sped down the mountains and wiped out the majority of the buildings. When visiting here, please respect the privacy of the current owners of the site.

The road is easy to find but very quickly deteriorates into a cobble-strewn thoroughfare. If you think this is bad- turn around now. It gets worse. About three miles farther the grade enters a rocky gully. Definitely low four-wheel drive terrain. In another two miles, a stark valley is reached; interesting hiking in the canyon to the right. Continue up into the cool pines. After 11 miles you reach the crest of the range at 9,500 feet. Take the road to the left to visit the Burgess Mine, where a shaft and buildings still remain. Backtrack to the intersection and take the road heading south and a little east. It rises over several crests offering great views of the Saline Valley to the east and Owens Lake to the west.

Either side of the crest is wilderness; so old spur roads you may see on a map are closed and could be washed out. Continuing on your path under the Old Salt Tram that used to transport salt from Saline Valley to Keeler. The tram is an amazing feat of engineering, a perfectly straight line across chaotic terrain. Unfortunately, it has slowly deteriorated over the years. Pretty soon you'll come to a cabin. This is a Mexican Spring. The cabin is being restored. You are allowed to sleep there but please treat it with care. The road drops along the west face of a hill and many mines can be seen. Stay out! Stay Alive!

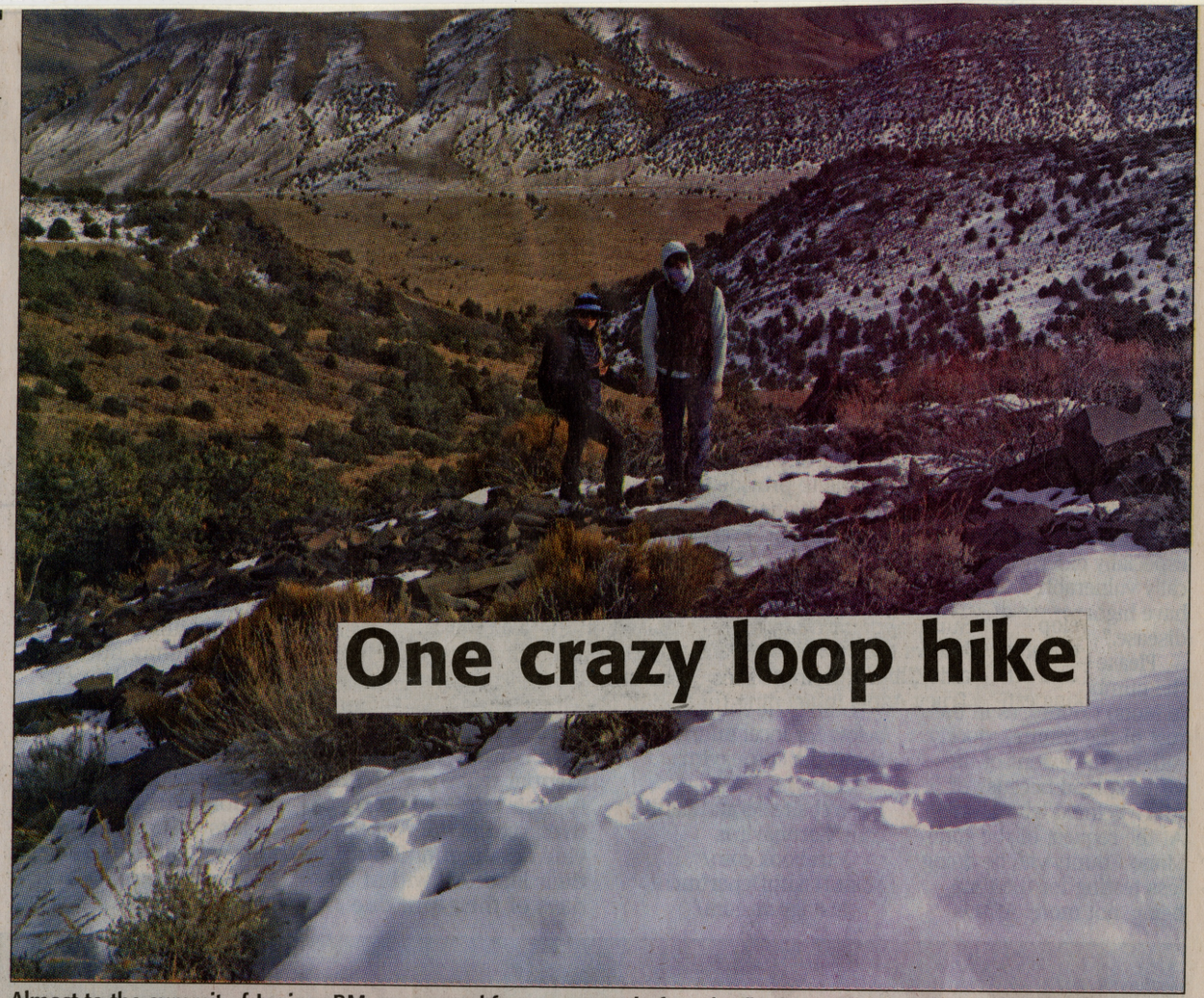
Twenty-one rough miles later (its been five hours if you stopped only a few times) you come to the town of Cerro Gordo. Rumor is this mine built Los Angeles and was the biggest gold producer in the region. Rare crystals and minerals have been found here, but the mines and tailings are off-limits to collectors. The town is privately owned by friendly Mike Patterson, (760-876-5030) It has a bed and breakfast and tours by reservation only. Drop-ins are discouraged, but Mike can be available if you are in need.



From here, head down the canyon past spectacular rock formations to Hwy. 136. Just south of the intersection is the old Keeler Pioneer Graveyard. Notice that some of the graves have been washed away. Who knows, you might see an old miner's thighbone sticking out of the ground!

One crazy loop hike

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST



Almost to the summit of Juniper BM, we paused for a moment before the final push to the top.

Photo by Craig Jackson

8965 feet, Juniper BM is one of those obscure peaks located practically in the middle of nowhere, yet still climbed periodically because it's in Andy Zdon's Desert Peaks book, and that's why we were there. It would end up being one of those days I'll never forget. Despite the pain and tribulation, we succeeded in our objective with absolute jubilation.

The sun had yet to rise on that mid-January Saturday morning, and at that same time the three of us left Bishop and headed southbound to Big Pine. Before entering the town itself, we turned left onto State Route 168 eastbound towards Westgard Pass. A few miles up the road, we turned right on Death Valley Road and drove another 16 miles or so before arriving at Little Cowhorn Valley. Far from any services, gas stations or restaurants, Little Cowhorn Valley is nestled nicely within the little known Cowhorn Mountains; a subrange of the Inyo Mountains. Thanks to Peter's planning, I was hiking in an area that I'd never been to before and it felt great to be out there.

What started out as a relatively simple 13 mile round trip hike, including a somewhat stiff hike to the summit of Juniper BM, turned out to be a 17 mile loop in a foot of snow on our hiking path. It would definitely test our mental and physical abilities to the max, which made it even more enjoyable.

It was merely 8:00am on that winter morning when the three of us started out on our adventure by hiking back up the road a mile to a dirt road on the right. Immediately we encountered snow, but it wasn't bad at all in the beginning, making far a pleasant start to our day-long trek. For the next few miles, we ascended gradually through a Pinyon pine and Juniper forest until we reached somewhere near the halfway point. Peter wanted to check out the remnants of the defunct Riche Mine, a short walk from the main road, so we headed in that direction. After a nice break and some exploring, we walked back to the main trail and continued the loop. So far to this point it had been a nice day in the mountains on a not-often-traveled forest road, but that would soon change.

After another four miles of steady uphill hiking we arrived at another junction, and turned right towards Juniper BM. Right away we noticed it was covered in one to two feet of snow, with extremely dense vegetation on both sides. At first, we happily marched onward, but after a few hundred feet under our boots, we were over it already. Constant post-holing rattled our bones for a bit, but we kept on going, aiming for the Juniper BM summit. It was in sight, yet seemed so far away.

With Peter leading the way, Sarah and I followed closely behind, utilizing the steps he was making in the snow. It was a struggle, each and every step, although we could now see the east ridge of Juniper BM, definitely a welcome sight. I'll admit it, it was tough and somewhat monotonously aggravating, but it had to end at some point, and it did when we finally landed on the ridge. What a relief.

It wasn't over yet though, we still had a good mile of uphill climbing to reach the top of Juniper. However, it wasn't as bad as walking that snow-covered road earlier, which kicked our butts. Now hiking on the south facing slope side, and avoiding more deep snow, we triumphantly arrived at the summit. Finally! It took seven hours but we made it.

The view of the distant Sierra Nevada to the west was breathtaking, as was every other direction. The wind up there was more than brisk, but the sunshine kept us warm while we ate, drank and enjoyed each other's company. It had been a great day to this point and we still had a steep descent back down to Little Cowhorn Valley. It wasn't over yet.

Our descent route was basically straight down the southeast slope of Juniper BM, over a large rock field and also in and out of a narrow canyon, then onto a nice open area for the last mile. It was fun at the beginning, frustrating in the middle and totally fulfilling in the end. Another great hike here in our neck of the woods.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Throwback Thursday

Eureka Valley

At the Eureka Valley Sulfur Mine, c. 1934. County Superintendent Charles Partridge's Buick is in front of the headquarters. He always had Buicks. Do you have a vintage or historical photo of people and places in Inyo County – including yourself or your family – that we can showcase as part of "Throwback Thursday"? If so, email your photo and caption information to editor@inyoregister.com, or drop it off or mail it to *The Inyo Register*, Attn: Editor, 407 W. Line St., Ste. 8, Bishop, CA 93514.

Photo courtesy the Partridge Family Collection

DESERT MYSTERIES:

THE BEEKEEPER OF McELVOY CANYON

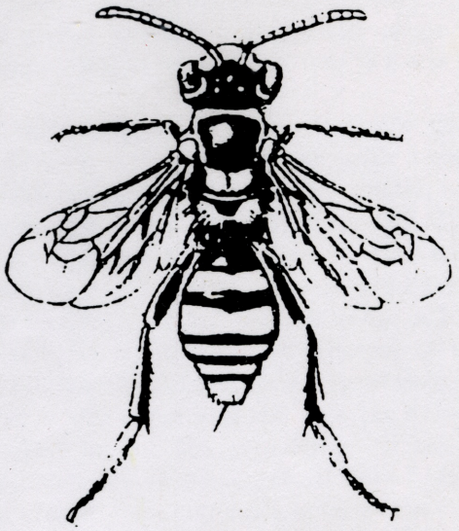
By Wendell Moyer

The mighty canyons located on the east side of the Inyo Mountains are truly wonders of nature. Over eons the sparse precipitation of the area has carved out these steep, deep, often narrow tortuous gorges. Originating high up along the 10,000 foot Inyo ridge, they snake their way down the eastern escarpment to the 1,100 foot Saline Valley floor in a mere four miles -- as the crow flies. The terrain through which they are cut is about as rugged, remote, and generally inaccessible as any place in the continental United States outside of Alaska. Despite the aridity, many of the canyons have year-round water flows through long sections, although this water rarely reaches the valley floor as surface water.

For the average "tourist" only the mouths of these canyons or short distances up from there can be appreciated due to the ever-present waterfalls (both wet and dry) which are often virtually impassible. Access to the upper reaches of these canyons is limited for the most part to those few hardy individuals possessed of strong nerves and a fair degree of technical rock climbing skills. Thus, each of the great canyons has the intrigue of the unknown. What's up there? Where does it go? What secrets are hidden within the rocky shrouds? It is safe to say that few people indeed have ever penetrated their interiors.

Of the eight or so major eastern Inyo canyons my favorite by far is McElvoy. A good trail leads up into the canyon on the south side bringing you in about one quarter mile to the beautiful fern grotto -- a towering overhanging wall covered with maidenhair ferns, continually bathed in a gentle shower of water from a waterfall high up on the wall. Monarch butterflies are frequently seen in the area. Year-round water flows through the canyon in a rapidly moving stream from the upper reaches of the canyon high on the slopes of Mt. Inyo continuously to just beyond the mouth in Saline Valley.

Another half mile up the canyon, on a well-used trail through a jungle of vegetation, and up over a couple of rock falls, brings you to the first "serious" waterfall. It is a moss-covered nearly vertical cascade dropping some 50 feet to a 10-foot diameter pool at its base. Here is encountered the first of the mysterious ladders of McElvoy



canyon -- ladders constructed of two strands of heavy baling wire with 1 1/2 half inch diameter log rungs. I remember well the first time I saw the strange wire ladder in the early 80's. I was both amazed and intrigued. Most first-timers there also have the same reaction. Who made this unusual ladder and where does it lead to? The ladder was in remarkably good condition at that time, although I didn't feel like trusting my life to it. Could it have been installed by miners? Serious mining had ceased in that area many years before, but then who knows how long a ladder of that type would hold up in that desert environment.

Inquiring to the "old timers" of the valley (Saline) about the strange ladder, I was informed that they were, in fact a series of ladders up the waterfalls of the canyon (no one knew exactly how many, nor had they seen more than the first two themselves); and that they were all installed by the "Beekeeper" -- a peculiar, hermit-like recluse about whom no one had any reliable information. According to the talk, however, this strange fellow was believed to have lived up in the canyon, occasionally accompanied by his brother. He was known to have kept bees since a case of mason jars full of local flower honey had been found cached near the mouth of the canyon a few years earlier. The beautifully constructed stone hut on the north side of the canyon mouth was also reputed to be his work.

Fascinated by the story of the mysterious Beekeeper and eager to see first hand the upper unknown reaches of this great canyon, I organized a climbing expedition a few years later. Our party was composed of two old friends

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Inyo Beekeeper - *continued*

(Doug McLean and Mike Riley) and me - - Doug McLean possessing the climbing skill necessary to keep the other two of us out of trouble if it came to that - - and it did!

Equipped with full rock climbing gear (rope, chocks, carabineers, slings, piton, etc.), we started up the canyon one fine October morning. The going was difficult and slow right from the beginning (since we were establishing our own new route and definitely not using the Beekeeper's ladders which had deteriorated noticeably by then.) The end of the first day found us high up in the heart of the canyon at the base of the beautiful 4th serious (ladder-containing) waterfall. It had taken all day to work our way up and over the three lower falls -- the 3rd of which had to be close to 150 feet in height! The Beekeeper/Ladder Builder had to be one very brave man with nerves of steel to climb that one -- believe me!

On the second day, we finally located a Class 4 route around the otherwise impassible waterfalls # 4 and #5 (very close together) -- without resorting to installing a bolt ladder. The going got easier -- except for the ever-present thorny jungle of vegetation that filled the canyon floor. Three more relatively easier ladder falls finally broke us out of the deep, tight portion of the lower canyon into the upper more open and accessible region.

Continuing up the canyon for a mile or so, passing the remains of two obviously quite old stone miners' huts, we were astonished to see before us, protruding from the center of the vegetation-choked valley floor, a stove pipe! With a little effort we located the badly overgrown but well-constructed stone pathway leading to a hut.

Upon entering we all had that eerie feeling of guilt -- that we were intruding into someone's home; the hut was in such good shape. The single room structure measuring about 10 X 12 feet was constructed of meticulously placed stones forming the walls. The roof was formed from tree boughs still mostly intact. In the center was a small pot-bellied stove with stove pipe extending above. Along the walls were roughly built but entirely functional table, bench, cabinets, and bed. Two hand-made stools and a chair constituted the furnishing.

Except for the badly overgrown vegetation surrounding the hut, and the debris,dropping, and nests of the present rodent occupants, one got the feeling that the owner might appear at any time. The wall shelves were stocked with food stuffs such as beans and flour, as well as the usual condiments, all stored in sealed glass bottles. Utensils, pots,pans, and tools of all sorts were neatly stored in their proper places. On the bed constructed of logs with split wooden staves was a bedroll somewhat the worse for wear due to the resident pack rat. Outside we observed many ore samples and crystal clusters commonly found associated with mining sites. But, more significantly, we also found four wooden beehives boxes of the type used by professional apiarists. We had, indeed, located the home of the Beekeeper of McElvoy Canyon.

Who was the mysterious owner and builder of the incredible ladders and this hut? Had he vacated the area or was he only temporarily gone? When was he last here? No direct evidence was present: no names, no records, no pictures. The only clues as to the identity of the hut's owner were a couple of publications on the care and tending of bees and a number of copies of "The Watch Tower", that all too familiar tract of the Jehovah's Witnesses dated in the mid-60's.

Proceeding on up the canyon another mile or so, we came upon the remains of the old McElvoy Mine and mill site. This site was also quite a surprise with its extensive and intricate stone work rivaling that of the Inca's in places. The remains of what was once a fine stone house with a large beautiful fitted stone fireplace still stood, although obviously abandoned for some considerable time. Evidence of mining and ore processing were scattered about over a wide area.

The ore vein that attracted the miners to the area originally was still evident. Angling diagonally upward on the north side of the canyon, the vein had been worked at the surface where it was exposed and by several tunnels sunk into the hillside. Slag from the mining littered the hillside.

While poking around the area, what do we find in one of the more snug and protected mine tunnels but another cache of the mysterious Beekeeper -- unmistakable evidence. In addition to another bed roll on top of a fine layer of soft straw, as well as food and other provisions, we found an "official" Beekeeper's pith helmet, complete with netting, a number of other items associated with beekeeping, and two cases of glass mason jars, all in perfect condition.

The return to Saline Valley was accomplished in a mere 8 hours -- compared to more than twice that time for the ascent. It helps when you know the route and have a good rope. A s climbs go, it was a good one (although we always say, "any climb that you can walk away from

is a good one"), but in this case, especially the memories lingered on. We had not really solved the mystery of McElvoy Canyon. The whole story could not be known until more was known about the elusive Beekeeper himself. I was now on a mission.

My mission has taken several years and some effort: talks with the area "old timers", a number of letters and finally some help and prodding from the Lone Pine chapter of the Jehovah's Witnesses. I am now happy to report that I have actually located the real and true Beekeeper of McElvoy Canyon -- live and in person. To be more specific, he is one Marion Howard, c/o General Delivery, Lone Pine, California.

Like most legends in their own time, the average person meeting Marion Howard and not familiar with his exploits probably would not be greatly impressed. Akin to the ignorant people of the Bishop area referring to the great Norman Clyde, that renowned Grand Master of Sierra Nevada climbing, as "Filthy McNasty" in the flagging years of his life (this derogatory sobriquet no doubt alluding to the fact that he was reputed to neither bathe nor change his clothes with any regularity) various unflattering terms possibly also could be directed toward Mr. Howard. In years past, terms like "vagabond", "tramp", or even "bum" might have been used. But now-a-days, with our new vision of social awareness, he would likely be labeled as "homeless" or societally disadvantaged." While all of the preceding epithets are technically correct, I feel that they do the man a grave disservice. A far better description, in my opinion, is "independent soul" or "free spirit."

Marion Howard is now approaching 84 years old, lives in the Owens Valley, near Lone Pine in a funky, small, old round-shaped trailer with (would you believe) a stove pipe prominently extending from the center of the roof. This "home" is relocated to various sites in the Owens Valley as necessitated by the BLM or other forms of officialdom requesting a change of venue.

When I met with him recently, he was located on the east side of the Owens Valley, at the end of the Manzanar-Reward road (about a mile from the Inyos) -- a site with little to recommend it except that "the price is right." Parked nearby was his venerable and now trade-mark old yellow pickup truck. With his trusty truck he essentially makes his living these days scouring highway 395 for items of value: Cans, bottles, plastic, etc, I am told by the locals that he can be seen with regularity along the roads there.

Contrary to my expectations of a taciturn, retiring, hermit-like fellow, I found him to be pleasant, open, and quite ready to discuss his "exploits," as best he can remember them now. Our conversation during the hour and a half period I spent with him rambled over a number of subjects. Summarized below are some of the more cogent details.

- Born and raised in a small town in NW Pennsylvania about 20 miles from Lake Erie. Had (at least) two brothers, who also came west and a sister still living in Pennsylvania.

- Drafted into the Army during World War II and served 28 months in Iran. A reluctant soldier.

- After the war worked several years for Chrysler in Detroit. Didn't like the ides of bosses "watching him."

- Moved West (date as yet unknown) to the Lone Pine area where he has resided more or less ever since.

- Worker summers as an itinerant, seasonal farm laborer in the strawberry fields of Oregon. Winter months were spent in the Lone Pine/Inyo Mountains area.

- Lived for some time in a mine tunnel at or near the Silver Spur mine -- "Board Flume Canyon" -- his description for the area named for the wooden board flume built by a miner to transport water to his cabin.

- Although a long time resident, he is never-the-less ignorant of the official names of many of the prominent Inyo features and of the trail system. He is apparently unaware of the Pat Keyes trail, among others, and refers to McElvoy Canyon as "McElroy."

- First went up and over the Inyos into McElvoy Canyon in the middle 60's. Evidently climbed "overland," meaning that he did not use established trails, either up the west side or down the east.

- Was active in the McElvoy Canyon area from the later '60s up until about 1980.

- Originally was unaware of a road in Saline Valley until he observed car lights down in the valley at night.

- Built the hut in upper McElvoy single-handedly. Was somehow able to move some good sized rocks in the process.

- - - concluded next page - - -

Inyo Beekeeper - *concluded*

- Decided to put in the waterfall ladders as maybe an easier way to get to and from his hut.

- Traveled back and forth across the Inyos "about once a week" throughout the winter months crossing the ridge at the highest saddle between Mt. Inyo and Keynot Peak. The crossing required one day each way.

- Snow in the mountains was often a problem but did not inhibit his regular crossings. Claims to have had to crawl many times through the snow using pine boughs for support. Can recall several memorable (difficult) snow crossings.

- Descending into the Owens Valley, it was his custom to spend the remainder of the night near the Lone Pine dump, lighting a fire for warmth.

- No pack animals were used at any time. A wheel barrow was used on the Lone Pine side to move his supplies from Lone Pine to the base of the mountains. From there everything was carried on his back, mostly contained in a big, old duffel bag thrown over his shoulder. "That way you can throw it down and rest when you get tired."

- Made a good effort to raise honey bees and did so for a while but they were "done-in by the wax moths." "Bad place, those Inyos, for wax moths."

- The ladders were constructed and placed by him single handedly over a period of a few years. He hand carried all wire for the ladders from Lone Pine over the Inyos to the sites.

- All ladders were constructed from the top down -- "just lowering them until they finally hit bottom." An effort was made to keep them out of the water, although he agreed that "you got plenty wet when you used them."

- Was very modest about his courage in using the ladders but admitted to at least two close calls: once when a kinked wire strand of ladder #3 (the 150 foot long one) broke when he was half way up; and another time in the dead of winter, with much ice in the canyon, when he "shouldn't of kicked that big icicle."

- Had two brothers, Brian and Andy, who accompanied him on occasion. Neither contributed significantly to his projects.

- Constructed the hut at the mouth of McElvoy Canyon. Built the hut around some really big stones, but otherwise moved all others by himself. Brother Andy may have helped here. This hut was not used much. A freak wind blew the roof off and it was never repaired.

- With the ladders in place and trail through the vegetation of the canyon clipped (used hedge clippers), he was able to make the trip from the canyon mouth to his upper hut in about half a day.

- Considered spending the summers there also, but decided against it. "That sun in Saline was so hot and bright it kind of dazzled me. I figured Oregon couldn't be any worse."

- Commenting about his simple, back-country life style, he remarked that if it wasn't for the (generous) welfare system of the cities, "there would be more people out here like me."

- When asked why he stopped going into the mountains, he replied: "Got a pick-up truck; pickup truck doesn't climb mountains."

Yes Marion Howard is certainly one of the most interesting individuals I have ever met -- peculiar for sure. I suppose that there are people who might be less charitable in their comments about him, even possibly questioning his sanity. However, having done some hiking in the Inyos over a period of years, I am honestly quite impressed with his accomplishments and an unabashed personal admirer. We don't have many people like Marion Howard anymore. That kind of individualism, resourcefulness, self reliance, and character is all too rare in our world today.

Unwittingly, Marion Howard has, by his efforts, greatly enriched the history and lore of that unique range of mountains, the Inyos. It is a sad commentary that today with our heightened awareness of the environment and more rigorously enforced government regulations there will be no more Beekeepers of McElvoy Canyon (or others like him) out there in the Inyos anymore -- or, for that matter, in any of our other wilderness areas. Yes, another passing era.

I am proud to say that I know Marion Howard. His remarkable efforts in the Inyos, I think, should be better known and appreciated. I hope that through this writing I can contribute to making this happen.

THE LEGEND OF WINNEDUMAH

Eons ago, the Indians say, the beautiful valley of Wau-co-ba (Owens Valley), lying between the densely wooded slopes of the Inyo Mountains on the east and the majestic Pahbatoyas on the west, was the most highly prized possession in Indian land. For from the mountain side bubbled hundreds of springs which flowed into as many brooks and formed the beautiful river, which emptied into the great lake (Owens Lake), on the edge of the desert, and from the Spirit Lake of Mono on the north to the desert's edge, countless deer, bear and antelope roamed at will. Of the feathered breed, ducks and geese often darkened the bright rays of the noonday sun, making the region a hunting ground coveted by all Indian tribes beyond its boundary.

The Paiutes claimed this cherished domain, and were at constant war with the Shoshones of the desert waste, and the so-called Diggers from over the Pahbatoyas, who sought to wrest their precious heritage from them. Valiantly, the brave and cunning Paiute for centuries fought off their enemy, until one day the Diggers, determined to crush their ancient foe, gathered their clan by the thousands and proceeded against the Paiutes to settle once and for all the ownership of the hunting ground.

On a broad upland plain, sloping gently down from the Pahbatoyas, in plain view of the great monolith looking down upon them, the Paiute braves, undaunted by the great host before them, marshaled their forces and with their ancient war cry thundering over mountain vale, plunged forward to meet the foe. Never was there such a battle before, nor afterwards, between these primitive foes.

Hundreds fell in the first clash of arms. Locked in deadly embrace, they crashed each other's skulls with their stone tomahawks, neither giving way. They fought on until darkness shrouded the scenes of the first day's carnage.

For days the battle raged on, more bitter and deadly, and with great loss of life. Thousands were slain until finally, overpowered by superior numbers, the valiant Paiutes had to flee.

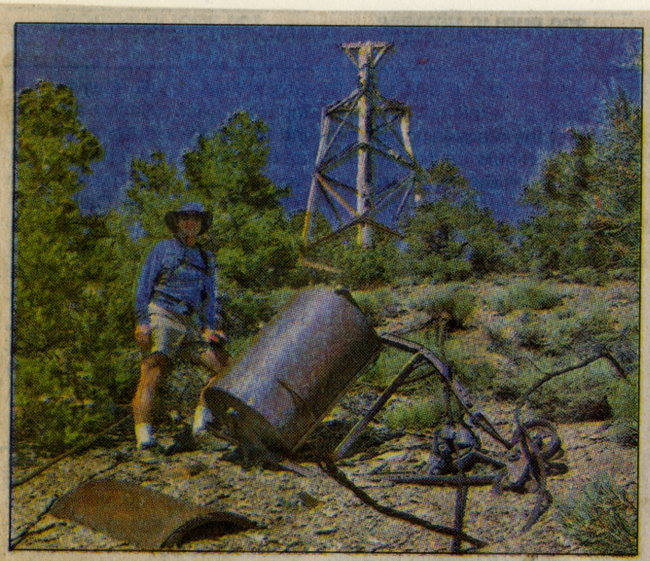
Many sought safety in hiding in the caves of lava beds; sorely pressed and alone, Winnedumah, the great medicine man of the tribe, whose supplications to the Great Spirit had failed to stay the victory of the loathsome Diggers, took to the beaten trail which led to the summit of the Inyos, and there with hands pressed against the mighty monoliths, which towered to the heaven of their Wolf God, the god of their creation, he stood and prayed that his warrior brother, Tinn-e-ma-ha, might yet defeat the foe. But Tinn-e-ma-ha had fallen in the battle, and the victorious Diggers were swarming up the trail to capture and torture Winnedumah.

He could hear their fiendish yells as they approached, nearer and nearer they came. They were upon him now, their tomahawks raised above their heads ready to strike, their deadly arrows fitted to the bow ready to send their feathered shafts through his body. He did not attempt to flee, but with eyes uplifted to the lofty rock above, his lips chanting the death song of the Paiute, he awaited the torture of the revengeful foe.

But succor was at hand. Out of the blue of the sky there came a mighty rumbling which drowned the bloodthirsty cry of the Diggers. The earth trembled and waved, black clouds rolled over, thunder bellowed, luminous fangs of lightning crashed overhead, and in the midst of this terrible convulsion the Great Spirit transformed Winnedumah into a monument of stone. While the awestricken Diggers were mute and paralyzed at the scenes before them, a greater shock came, and, from its foundation of thousands of years, the brother monolith with an angry roar toppled to the ground, breaking into fragments and killing the many Indians who were in its path.

With what spark of life those who survived could muster, they hastened below to the battlefield, and rushed in trembling fear through the rugged passes of the Pahbatoyas to their more peaceful homes, never to return to the valley of Wau-co-ba.

by Dan Rose, c1927.



Above left: The remote route of the 13.5-mile Salt Tram has helped preserve artifacts, such as the bucket and cable shown above. Above right: This group of men are checking out the tram and bucket. It was not uncommon for workers to ride in the tram buckets. Left photo courtesy Waag Brothers/right photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

Guest speakers bring historic salt to museum's annual meeting

Intrepid brothers will talk about history of Inyo's famous Salt Tram

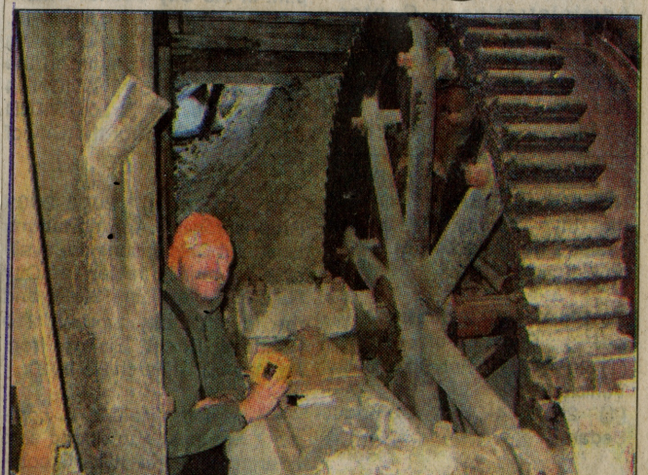
3-11-2010

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

The Friends of the Eastern California Museum are hosting a 2010 annual meeting and potluck Saturday evening, March 13, in Independence, but the Waag brothers are bringing a taste of historical salt to the proceedings.

Tim and Brian Waag are the guest speakers at the annual meeting and they will provide a unique look at the 13.5-mile long Saline Valley Salt Tram. The pair has been researching the Salt Tram for years, supplementing their records research with on-the-ground observations and photos they have made during numerous, multi-day outings involving hiking and camping along the entire length of the tramway. (The brothers work with the various federal land managers along the route.)

On Saturday night, the Waags will lead a guided pictorial tour of one of their hazardous, three-day hikes along the entire length of the Salt Tram Route.



Tim Waag inside the workings of a tram tower. Photo courtesy Waag Brothers

In addition, Tim Waag noted the pair would like to talk with people who still remember when the tram and mine were running, or who have photos, stories, documents, or any other sort of information about the famous tramway.

At 7 p.m., the Waag brothers will take over and give the audience a taste of what they freely admit is their "borderline obsession" with the Salt Tram and its history.

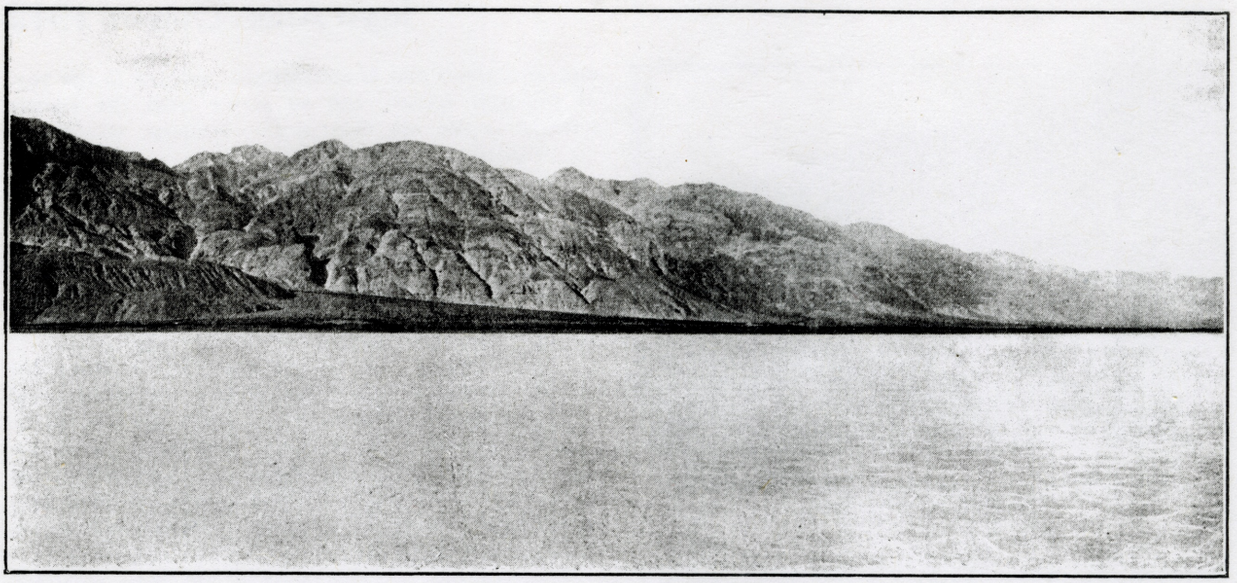
The brothers penned the following, brief overview of their attraction to the tram:

"It's hard to write a suitable (or short) bio as it relates to a borderline obsession such as the Salt Tram, just as it is difficult to describe the attraction to something that on its face, is merely a mundane material transportation mechanism that has long since passed its usefulness, with a subset of its once grandiose machinery managing to cling to the inhospitable Inyo Mountains, that supposed ugly stepsister to the grand and dandy Sierra across the valley.

"The real story is the ever-increasing pull of the Salt Tram, which goes beyond the basic facts: Construction began in 1911, it started operation in 1913, and ceased its salt deliveries by 1932 as the recession settled in for the decade. From the first time a person sets their eyes on its massive structures, they are hooked. Repeated visits only emboldened us to learn more, and in learning more, found that the tram has never been thoroughly investigated and documented for the wonderful, crazy idea from another time that it represents. We decided we were up to the challenge of drawing in as much as there is to know about the amped up ambition of local Bishop attorney White Smith, and his desire to build what is referred to as 'White Smith's Fabulous Salt Tram.' That title is courtesy of the late and marvelous desert wanderer, and researcher, Mary DeDecker (of Independence), which first appeared in the Death Valley 49ers Keepsake No. 3 from November, 1993."

The Waag brothers' presentation will begin with the genesis of Tennessee-born White Smith's inspiration to build this truly one-of-a-kind Saline Valley salt mine and 13.5-mile tramway over the entire Inyo Mountains to Owens Valley and its railroad spur. Tim and Brian will then lead a guided pictorial tour of their hazardous three-day trek along the entire Salt Tram route, starting in Owens Valley and ending in Saline Valley. Finally, they will focus on the many mysteries that still confront them regarding the Salt Tram's construction, operation, bankruptcies, wild bucket rides and ultimate demise.

After their presentation, they hope to connect with local residents, fellow researchers, and others who might have information, stories, or artifacts that can aid their research efforts.



The Saline Valley salt field—This shows but a small section of the immense area *Photo by Forbes*

The Purest Salt in the World

A Big Enterprise with Headquarters at Bishop

In the different sections of our country different localities are favored with different natural wonders. New York State has its Niagara, Kentucky its Mammoth Cave, Arizona its grand canyons, while Wyoming and California have their Yellowstone Park and Yosemite Valley. Inyo County has its Mount Whitney, the highest mountain peak in the United States, and Death Valley, which is below the level of the sea, and among other curiosities, Saline Valley, in which the natural deposit of pure salt is of interest to the scientist as well as of practical value to mankind.

The existence of this snow-white valley of salt has been known from the earliest times that settlers came to Owens Valley with their prairie schooners, fought the Indians and depended upon the natural products of the country to provide the necessities of life.

This barren, unsettled Saline Valley being far removed from the agricultural sections of the Owens Valley, made the transportation of this salt in larger quantities than required for the household consumption of the residents of Owens Valley a too expensive undertaking to be remunerative commercially, and consequently this vast deposit has remained undeveloped for these many years.

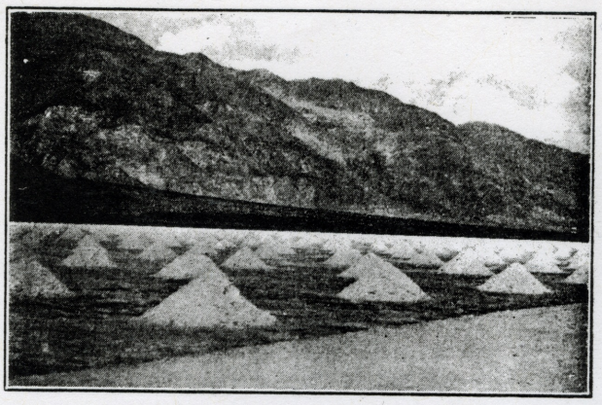
About a year ago some gentlemen, who had acquired possession of this salt field, interested capital in its development by means of the construction of an aerial wire rope tramway, which would convey this salt over the high White Mountain Range, a distance of thirteen miles, to the railroad, and thereby further a cheap and ready means of transportation in lieu of the sixty-five mile wagon haul which had been the only other means of transportation from the field.

In order that the reader may comprehend the appearance and magnitude of this deposit, it will be well to give some slight description of it. Imagine a newly-fallen blanket of snow, dazzling white, covering an area of a couple of square miles, the surface smooth and hard and perfectly level, occupying the lowest portion of the well-named Saline Valley. On all sides rise mountains of elevations of from eight to ten thousand feet, while the field itself is but 1,058 feet above sea-level. The depth of the deposit is unknown, though tradition states that a shaft has been sunk to a depth of at least thirty feet, and was still in pure rock salt.

Analyses, which various stockholders of the company have had made by their chemists in different parts of the United States, show that it contains less than one per cent. of all impurities, this meaning earthy matter and all other chemicals than sodium chloride, which is the chemical name for absolutely pure salt.

The thirteen mile aerial wire rope tramway, which will convey the salt from the salt field to the railroad, will be divided into five sections, each of which is really an independent tramway. These sections are of varying lengths, the length being dependent upon the elevation attained by such sections, and consequently they are from one and three-quarters to four miles in length.

The summit of the White Mountains over which the tramway passes is 8,700 feet above sea-level. The elevation of the salt field being 1,000 feet above sea level requires the salt to be raised to an elevation of 7,700 feet. This elevation is accomplished by three sections of tramway, each of which raises the salt a height of about 2,600 feet. From this summit the bucket carriers will convey the salt to Swansea, descending the mountain range with a drop of 5,100 feet, which naturally makes two more sections, each of about 2,600 feet descent.



Many thousands of tons of salt are piled in snow-white heaps for further gathering

This wire rope tramway consists of two especially constructed heavy wire cables suspended from timber structures of varying heights so as to make a comparatively even grade. These wire cables are spaced eight feet apart horizontally, and upon one of them the carrier wheels of the loaded buckets pass from the salt field to the railroad terminus, while upon the other the empty buckets return to the salt field.

These heavy cables, which are called the track cables, remain stationary and upon them the wheels supporting the bucket carriers will run. Motion will be imparted to the buckets by means of a three-fourths inch field cable, which is continuous for the length of each section and which passes around a grip wheel at the upper end and then returns on the opposite side of the tramway to the loading point underneath the track cables.

Buckets are attached to this moving cable by means of a small clamping device, which is automatically released when the bucket and load reach the end of the special section over which they have traveled. From such point the bucket passes through the intermediate stations and is automatically gripped to the rope of the next section, and so passes from the loading terminal at the salt field to the discharge terminal at the railroad.

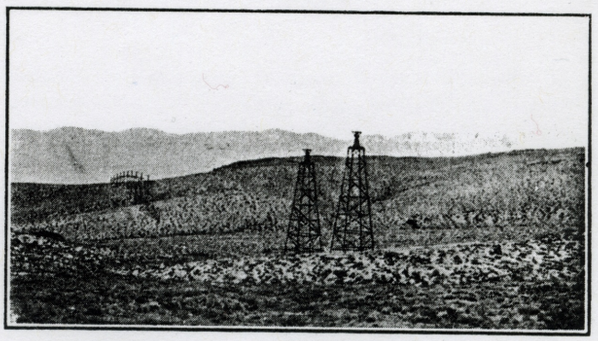
The power to operate the tramway will be electrical, and will be supplied from the motors at the upper end of each section directly to the grip wheels controlling the moving cable.

The capacity of the tramway is twenty tons per hour at ordinary speed, and can readily be increased to thirty, or even more, if it becomes desirable.

The construction of this tramway has required the use of one million feet, board measure, of lumber, and six hundred tons of iron, all of which has had to be transported over rough and precipitous mountain trails and country so inaccessible and precipitous that it has been with only the greatest difficulty that men could pass over the line of the tramway before the trails were constructed.

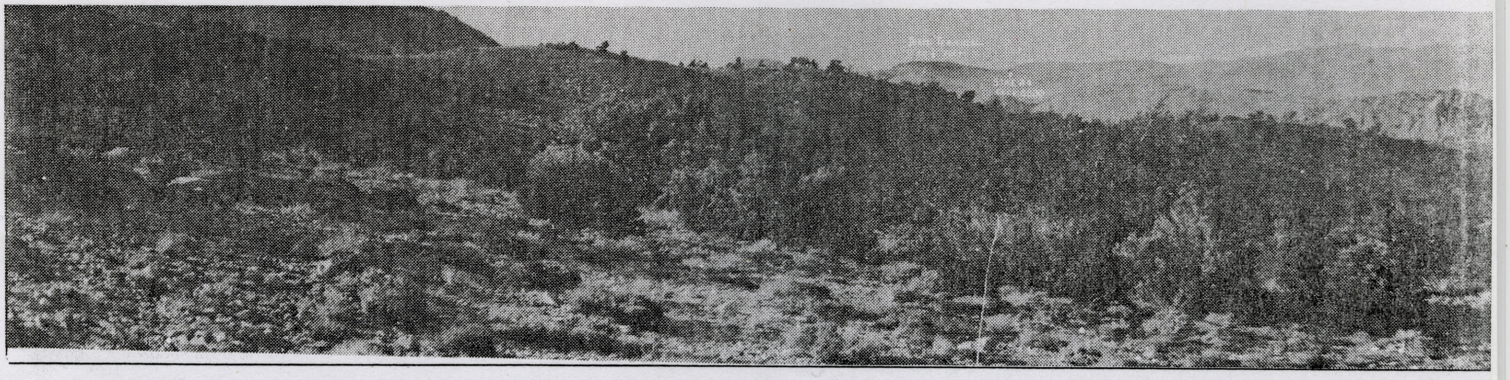
The material for the tramway has been furnished and the plans have been prepared by the Trenton Iron Company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation, which company has had over thirty years experience in the construction of such tramways, and guarantees its successful operation.

The entire expense of placing this remarkably pure salt, in fact the purest known salt in the world, upon the general market will be nearly half a million dollars.



These towers are the tallest on the tram route; height about 92 feet

The salt field from five miles' distance



Ghost of a Skeleton Revisited

by Willma Willis Gore

An old Bledsoe photograph of the piles of salt ready to be carried from Saline Valley to the mill at Tramway. This photo and the Bledsoe panorama courtesy of the late Ruth Willis (Mrs. Bev) Hunter.

Returning to Owens Valley last fall after a long absence, I set about exploring old sites I'd known and photographed in years past. Among these adventures was retracing the Willis Dairy milk route from Lone Pine to Keeler and searching for evidence of remembered relics.

As a teenager in the late '30s, I was proud to drive the milk truck, a little '29 Model A pickup. In its bed were sturdy wood and wire cases, each holding a dozen glass quarts of raw milk. "Willis Dairy, Lone Pine, California" was embossed on each. (How I wish I'd saved one of these!) Spread over the cases to help keep the milk cool and the bottles dust-free, were pieces of wet gunny sack.

As the eldest, I was the driver and my sister Jan rode beside me. It was her job to "run the bottles," that is, carry a quart or more to designated doorsteps in Keeler and the little Natural Soda Products Company (NSP) town just beyond. Jan also picked up the empties.

Lying between us on the car seat was a looseleaf book with a page for each customer. These pages were headed by a name and mailing address. A tight grid with a square for each delivery day made up the bulk of the page. The driver's job was to carefully mark with a figure or a zero the number of bottles delivered to the customer. From this book Mother (Elva Tate Willis) made out the bills each month.

A running feud between this two-girl delivery team centered on whether it was more work to do the driving and keep the records (the "brain-strain" responsibility, I claimed) or to run the white, cool bottles to the porches and bring back the "icky" dirty ones.

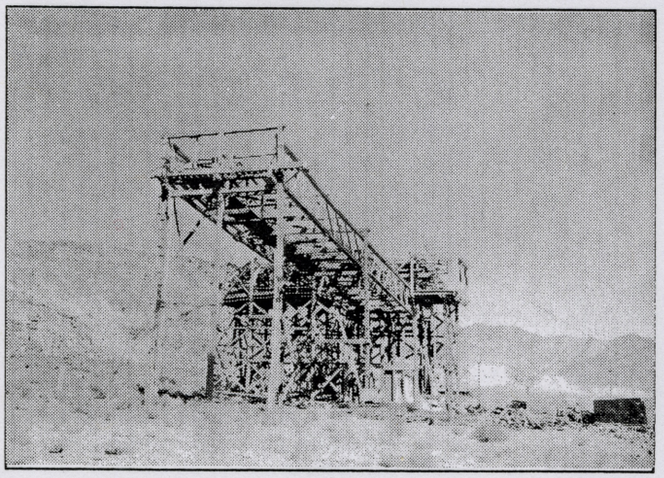
Among the sites we passed — totally boring to us then — was the Owens River, creeping languid and smelly between its willow-shaded, saltgrass banks. Then we came to the sand dunes. Their chief virtue was providing a glaring white interruption in the sagebrush-gray landscape. As we skirted the base of the Inyo Mountains, the brown timbers of the salt tram were silhouetted against the lavender and blue foothills, a landmark we knew then only as a tall, ugly skeleton of a building.

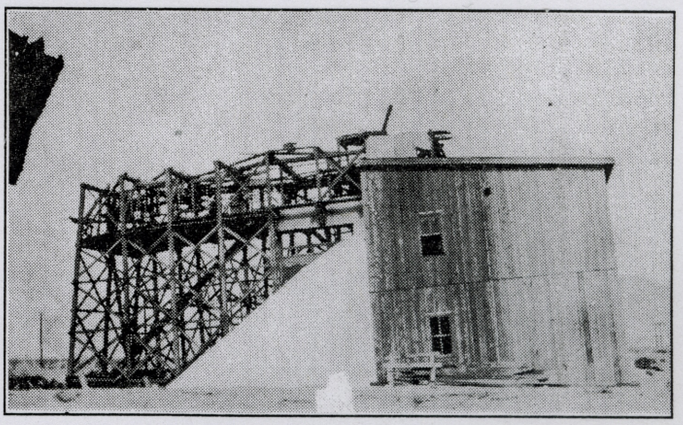
To my dismay on a recent trip, I saw that almost nothing of this piece of Owens Valley history was left. It had been Tramway, California, about 12 miles from Lone Pine, and in the century's first decades, the center of a new industry: the mining of salt.

When we visited in the late 1930s and '40s giant buckets still swung on rusty cables high in the structure. The aerial system, built by the Saline Valley Salt Corporation, operated for only nine years from the time it was built in 1913 until 1929 when the tram was removed.

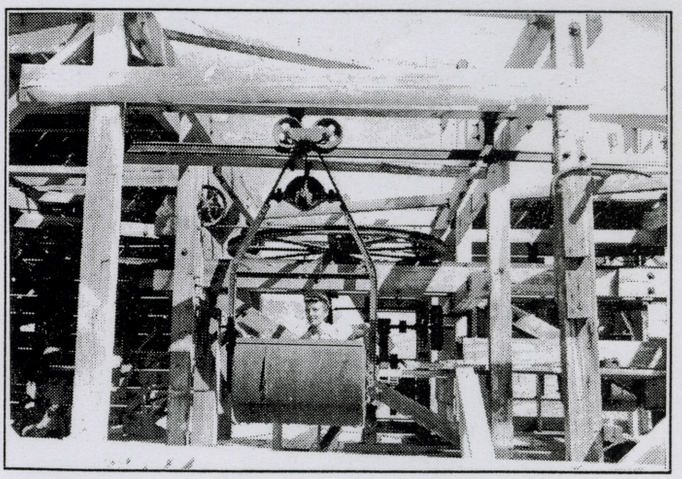
In the '40s, besides the tall structure of the terminal, a double row of cables could be seen, strung between wooden towers. As far as the eye could see up the face of the range, the towers, spaced at quarter-mile intervals, supported the woven wire rope. A few buckets still hung from it, left as they were when the motors stopped.

Tramway was the mill where the salt was graded and sacked but the product was mined in Saline Valley on the other side of the Inyo Moutains. The buckets traveled the 13 miles of aerial cable, the only means of bringing the salt out for train transport in Owens Valley.





Beneath the long extension on the north end of the mill were the large bins, now dismantled, in which the screened salt was kept prior to shipment. 250 buckets rode daily to the mill, which could process 70 tons of salt a day. John A. Simpson photograph. Upper right, an earlier photo courtesy Howard McAfee.



The empty buckets left this platform to return along the cable to Saline Valley, thirteen miles across the Inyo Mountains. Willma Simpson (Gore) sits on a weathered seat inside the bucket, which occasionally carried workers as well as salt. John A. Simpson photograph

Skeleton of tram support still stands on the hill above the tram terminal site, the "woolly caterpillar" mentioned at the end of the article. Willma Gore photograph.

Sixteen square miles of the Saline Valley floor were covered to a depth of about 30 feet with salt of such purity that it could be used without processing. Long before the tram was built, placer claims were patented in Saline and the salt was being used by Owens Valley people. However, in order to get across the mountains then, the salt traveled a long route in double wagons drawn by eight and ten-horse teams. The haul was north through the upper Saline into Cow Horn Valley to Waucoba Pass in the Inyos, then down to the Valley in the vicinity of Big Pine. Some of the salt was ground in Bishop for table use and sold in the valley for preserving meat. Fifty pound sacks went into the Sierra for use on the summer cattle range.

In 1911, White Smith, a Bishop lawyer, organized and began selling stock in the Saline Valley Salt Corporation. By 1913 he had constructed the aerial tram. To recover the salt, the flat Saline Valley floor was flooded and, as the water evaporated, Mexican and Indian workers shoveled it into heaps resembling hay cocks. The temperatures ranged from 115 to 120 degrees on the blinding white surface. The salt, recovered at 1050 ft. elevation was loaded into the tram buckets to begin its journey across the 8700 ft. summit and down to the mill at Tramway, 3600 ft. elevation. Electricity generated at plants in Owens Valley supplied the power.

Workers at the mill graded and sacked the salt for shipment on cars of the Slim Princess, the oldtimers' name for the narrow gauge branch of the Southern Pacific that joined the broadgauge to Los Angeles at Owenyo.

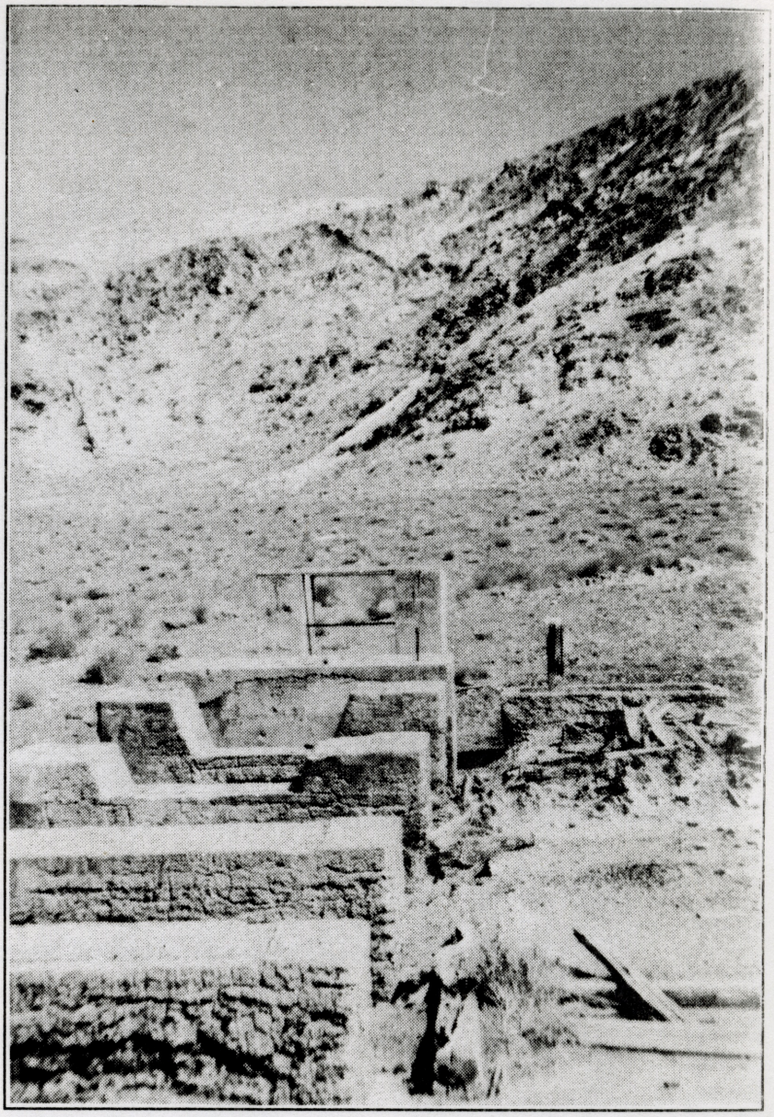
An aerial tram is an expensive undertaking at the outset. Had its cargo been gold, it might have paid its promoters. That it did not pay was testified to in the '40s by Edward Shepherd of Indpendence who lost his $5000 investment in the scheme. However, he reported a suspenseful ride across the mountains in a tram bucket during an inspection tour of what he hoped would become a thriving business.

In spite of the fine quality of the

salt, the Saline Valley Salt Corporation ceased production the first year. Between 1913 and 1930 it operated under three different owners. About 30,000 tons of salt were shipped during these spasmodic operations, the largest shipments made in 1929 when the system was renovated. The total investment was about a million dollars.

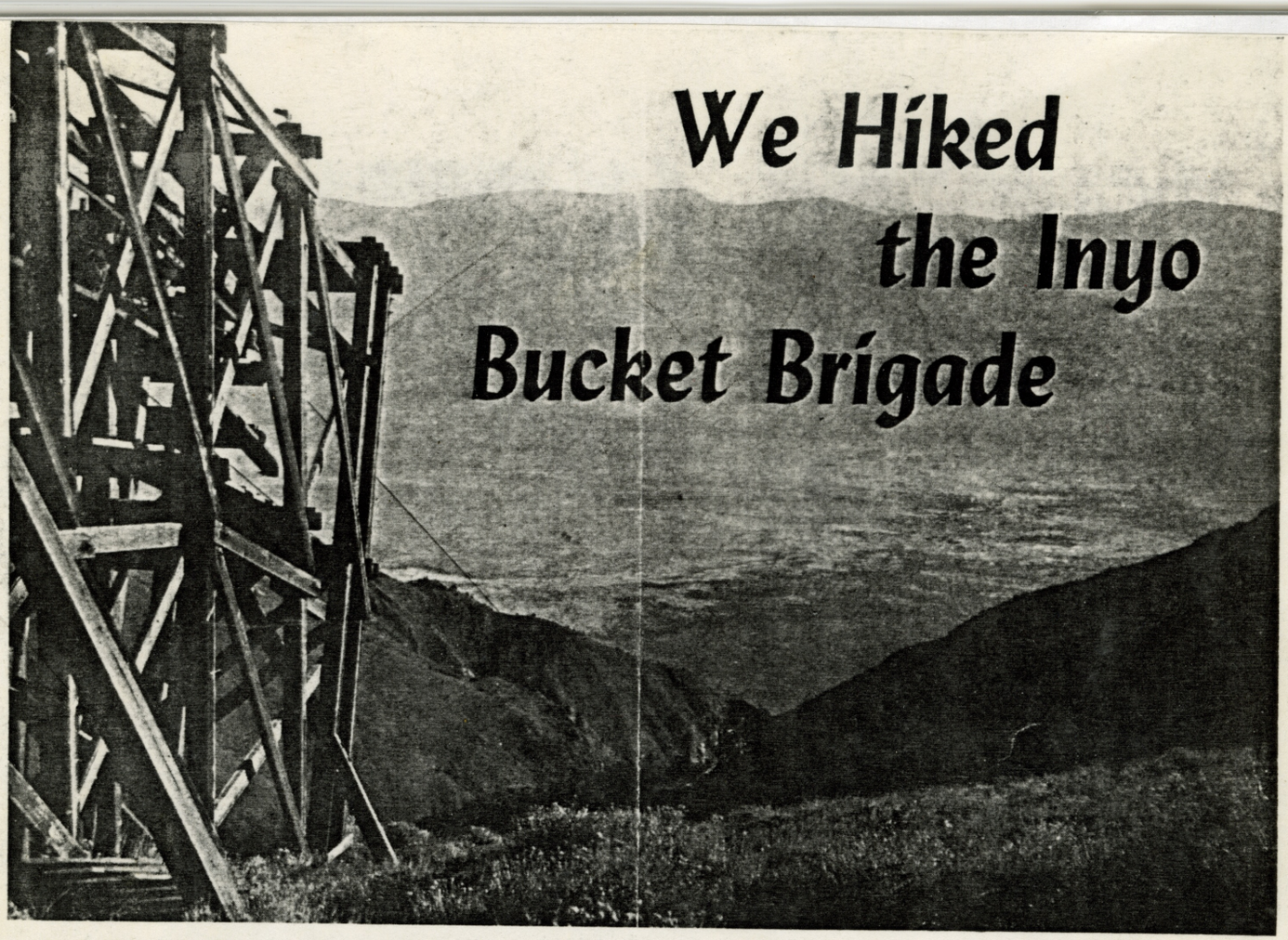
Subsequently, the terminal was dismantled for scrap. Only a few blocks of cement and pieces of scrap metal remain of Tramway today. But high on a hill, east of the site, too remote for economic salvage, a long block of supports for the aerial tram still stands against the skyline, appearing like a woolly caterpillar, lost on its route across the Inyo Range.

This skeleton on the hill and a few photographs are treasured memories of my Willis Dairy days in Lone Pine. ❊



Remains of the salt tram near Highway 126, Death Valley route. Willma Gore photograph

Carl and Hazel McAfee joyride the tramway. Photo courtesy Howard McAfee



We Hiked the Inyo Bucket Brigade

The Saline Valley tramway on California's Mojave Desert was a bold mining venture—13 miles of steel cable over the rugged Inyo Mountains.

8-1959

By ROBERT O. GREENAWALT

VALUE OF the extremely concentrated salt deposit in Saline Valley, a raw desolate trough west of Death Valley, was early recognized by mining men—but between the salt lake and a transportation outlet to the waiting markets of Southern California was the massive barrier of the Inyo Mountains. This rocky ridge abruptly rises 7000 feet above the lake.

The Saline Valley Salt Company engineers made bold plans: a 13.4 mile tramway over the Inyos to a discharge terminal near Swansea, historic eastern shore port on Owens Lake when that lake held its due share of water.

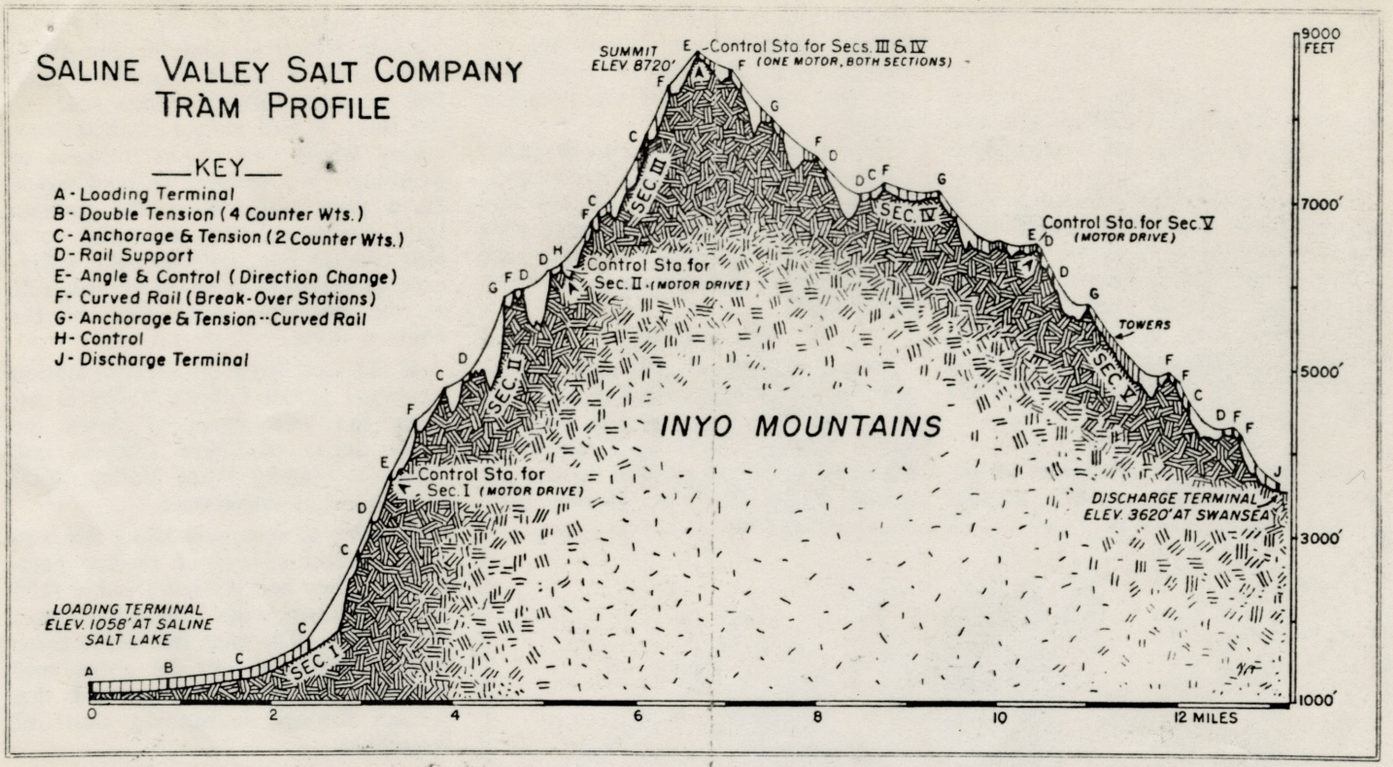
After two arduous years of mule-powered construction, the system began operating in 1913. Capable of hourly transporting 20 tons of what local residents claim is still "the purest salt in the world," and cutting four arrow-straight swaths in its right-of-way over the mountains, the line was routed from the salt lake's south shore up precipitous Daisy Canyon, across the summit saddle between 10,668-foot New York Butte and 9705-foot Pleasant Mountain, and then down across a series of brushy canyons past pock-marked striated cliffs to the floor of Owens Valley. The discharge terminal was connected with Keeler by the Southern Pacific narrow gage railroad line, the posted stop of "Tramway" adequately handling the salt trade.

Not only did the multiple steel strings supported by heavy wooden frameworks represent one of the world's longest tramways at that time —13 miles of cable line in the year 1913—the salt tram provided the highest lift, and few would dispute the fact that the tram traversed a finger of the most rugged terrain on earth.

For 17 years of intermittent operation by several companies the salt tram's nearly 300 buckets made the slow round trips from loading terminal to discharge terminal. In 1930 the Depression — and competition from better sodium chloride deposits — wrote an end to the mining venture.

I have long been interested in this project. Last summer I hiked along the bucket brigade, heeding the advice of a number of long-time Owens Valley residents who answered my queries concerning the present condition of the tram with: "Can't tell you much about it, you'll have to go up the mountain and see for yourself."

The daybreak hour of a Saturday morn found five companions and me huddled around a campfire munching breakfast. We had camped off Highway 190 near the several weathered cabins that mark Swansea and the discharge terminal site. Only numerous concrete footings, a small



pile of dust-laden salt, and the ruts of an uprooted railway spur give evidence of the discharge terminal's position. Before shipping, the stockpiled salt was crushed at this site.

Our party was split into two teams: hikers and drivers. The hikers, Don Minassian, Fred Duerst and I, would make our ascent of the western face of the mountain that day. The drivers, Hugh Parshall, Andy Kocela and Rolly Shehyn, were to take our vehicles over a 16.5 mile roundabout jeep trail and set up camp at the tram summit.

With a "See you before dark, and have supper ready," we were on our way. We climbed the near ridge hand over foot and soon reached our first massive framework. It stands several hundred feet above the highway, but is barely visible to passing motorists. The cables were supported along the 13 mile up-and-down-hill route by 39 such major structures. Between them, 123 80-foot-high intermediate towers kept the cargo off the ground along the parallel slopes and more shallow canyons.

Carted Off Wood

All of the structures within easy access of roads, including both terminals, have long since been carted off—easy prey of the wood gatherers and junk dealers. Used lumber can be very precious on the sparsely populated desert. The stout 10x10s are especially prized. But because most of this jagged range is inaccessible, especially the eastern slopes, the mountain will be as reluctant to give up its tram as it was to receive it.

The morning climb was rugged, and the panorama of the broad expanse of Owens Valley became more impressive at each new height. Into view on the far side of the lake came the ribbon formed by the Southern Pacific's "Jawbone" broad gage. The construction of this railroad north from Mojave in 1911 was largely responsible for the tram's creation. The broad gage joined the narrow rails at Owenyo.

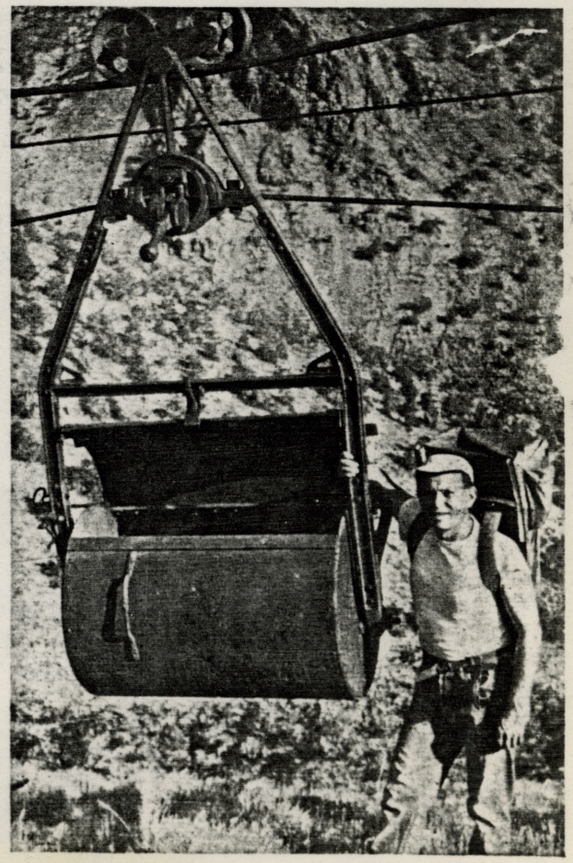
Near one of the towers we found a small rattlesnake shading itself near a corner footing. In the higher country we came across four remote operators' cabins, a couple in the same condition as they were when their inhabitants left them for the last time.

Bleached White

The western slope's towers, some void of cables, are bleached a dull white. Many of the steel buckets that formed the brigade still cling to their steadfast cables high over deep canyons. Other wire ropes, victims of vandals' hacksaws, lie limply on the ground as their twisted containers rest half-buried in churned-over cloudburst debris.

Near the 7000-foot contour friendly pinyon pines began to appear, and joined by juniper and mountain mahogany, they accompanied us to the summit.

We were well spent as we approached the crest. Within whistling distance of camp, a shout from one of the drivers enlightened our spirits. Dinner was ready, as promised, and the sleeping bags were layed out on



THE AUTHOR AND ONE OF THE SALINE VALLEY TRAM BUCKETS. STEEL CONTAINER HELD ABOUT 800 POUNDS OF SALT. ITS TWO-WHEEL CARRIAGE RODE THE STATIONARY SMOOTH TRACK CABLE WHILE THE AUTOMATIC GRIP BELOW ATTACHED ITSELF TO THE MOVING TRACTION ROPE.

the pleasant veranda of the summit operator's six-room house. This is an impressive campsite — 8700 feet in altitude, surrounded by a beautifully fragrant forest, and far below the sight of creeping headlights of Sierra motorists.

The sparkling night was void of all sound, but it was not this way when the tram was in operation. This was a busy place with a bucket of Saline salt raising its head over the eastern crest almost ever minute. From the opposite direction an empty bucket would come jogging through the pines, and then disappear.

Control Points

The summit station motors drove two of the five sections that formed the continuous circuit. Each station housed equipment for controlling the electrically-driven traction ropes that provided the thrust for the two-hour journey.

The parallel stationary track cables were eight feet apart, and the buckets, holding 800 pounds of salt and suspended from two-wheel carriages, rode the smooth track cables. Automatic grips attached the buckets to the moving ropes.

The Last Leg

The three drivers left early in the morning, their destination the same as ours: the salt lake on the floor of Saline Valley. Their route was along the crest of the mountains to the old mining camp of Cerro Gordo, back to the highway at Keeler, and then a 50-mile J-loop around the mountains to the lake. We hikers took the shorter, but far more difficult, direct route to the lake. It was almost straight-down hiking which can be as arduous as climbing. We entered Daisy Canyon on a poor trail. Here the wooden tram structures were seasoned to a rich reddish hue, reflecting the difference in exposure received on this side of the mountain from that of the western slope.

If the view from the summit station westward across Owens Valley is superb, the view eastward down the dizzy slopes of Daisy Canyon and across forbidding Saline Valley, 7000 feet below, is sensational.

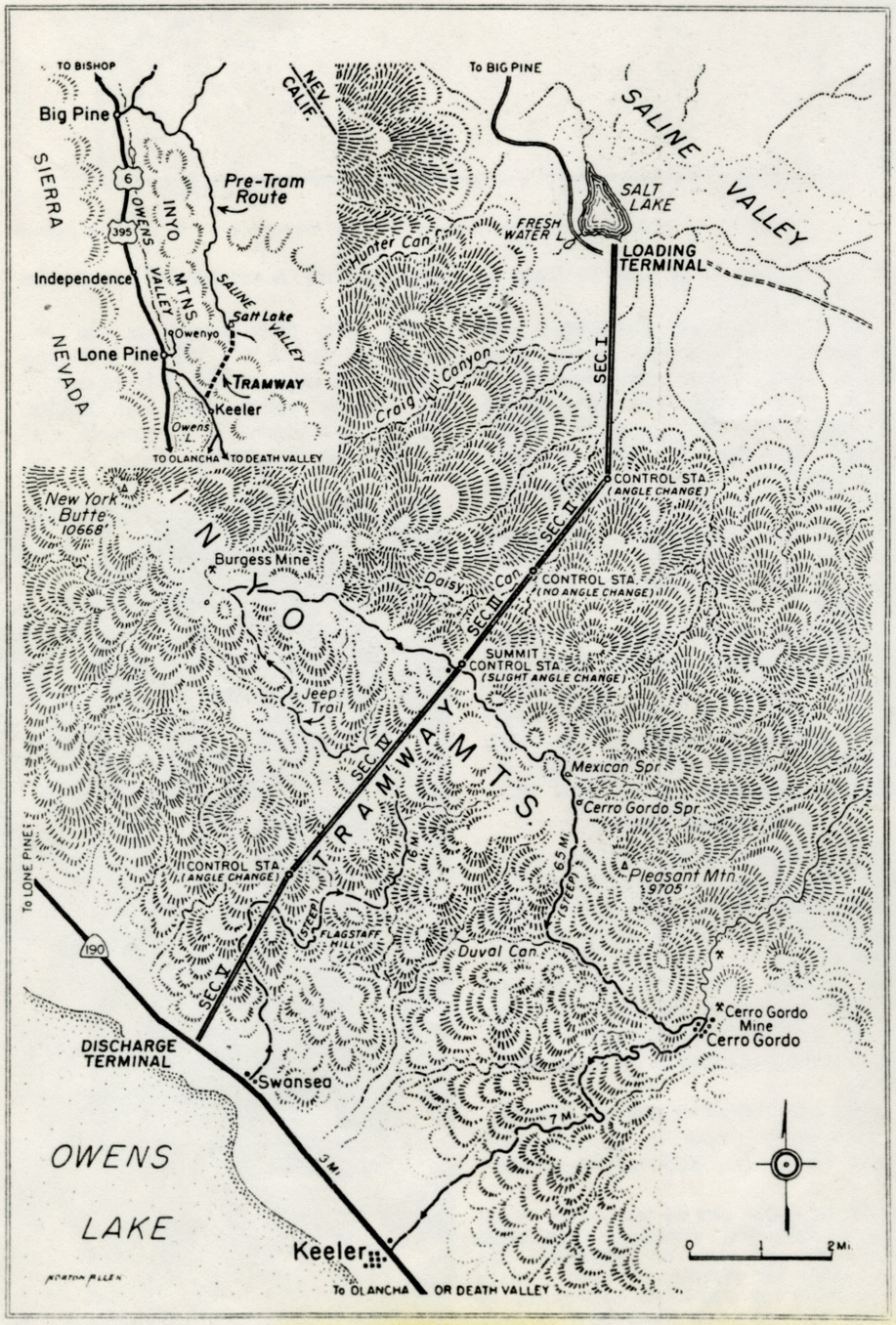
Keeping us company along the way were several coveys of chukar partridges. They had far less trouble than we in following the dim trails down the canyon. The tram line made three wild broadjumps over the gorge, and how the engineers ever pushed this project through is nothing short of incredible.

Three Lakes Below

We stopped to rest at the Section I control station on the lower mountain slopes. From this vantage point the Saline Valley lake became three lakes: the dry playa, the salt lake, and to the west a fresh water lake. The latter body of water is frequented by many birds. A black speck on the shores of the salt lake indicated the position of our transportation.

At this control station, whose stable still contains a supply of straw, the cables turned a sharp angle for a beeline northward to the loading terminal which we reached in late afternoon. The dock is marked today by small pieces of lumber rent into grotesque shapes by salt action. We joined the birds for a dip in the fresh water lake, and much refreshed we settled down for an evening around a cheery campfire.

Behind us, hidden by night, was the half-million dollar monument to a marvelous project that wasn't worth its salt financially.—END



See "The Album" Vol. 5, #4 Page 28

"Fabulous Salt Tram" by Mary DeDecker 1993

"Historic Legends of Inyo County" 1976

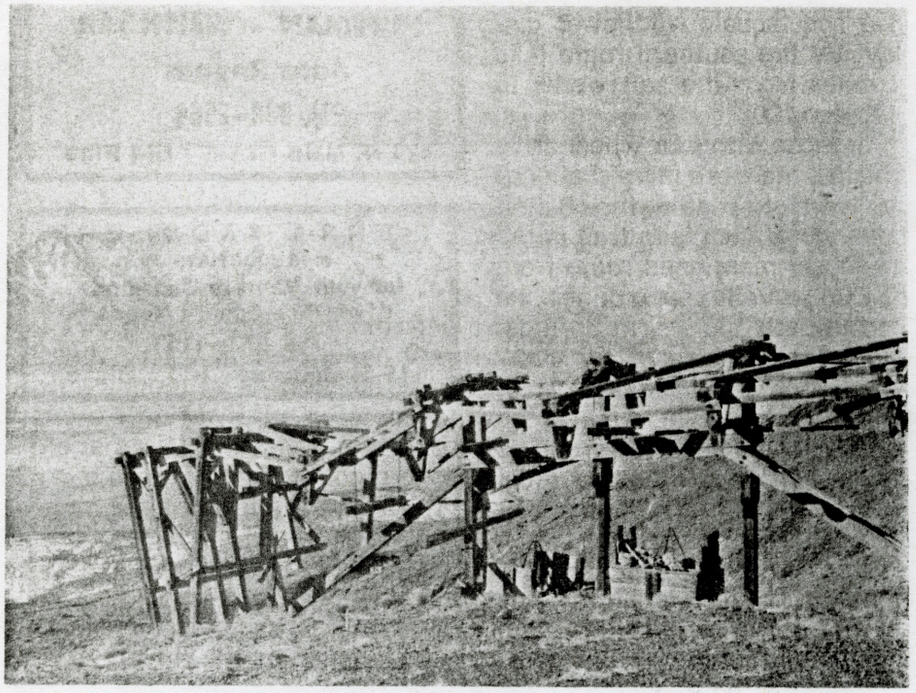
Indian markings tell of a long ago population.

THE SALINE VALLEY

There is a huge depression in the middle of California's Inyo County which has much to offer the desert enthusiast and weekend explorer. Known as the Saline Valley, this cavity in the earth's crust covers several hundred square miles. Despite its immense size, the area is overlooked by the general public. There are no paved roads or communities in the region, so apparently cartographers feel there is nothing of interest there!

History does not state when white men first entered the valley, but whatever the date, the area was occupied centuries before. The Indians who roamed these barren hills came to the valley in the Winter months for it was relatively warm. Another attraction was the salt, a commodity which had considerable trade value with other aborigines living on the west side of the Sierras.

Evidence of early Indian occupation can be found in many places throughout the valley. One large campsite was on the alluvial fan at the mouth of Hunter Canyon. There were more than two dozen stone "house rings" on the flat, with another half dozen on the hill just to the south. Old-timers tell of counting 75 or more. Even today, the observant visitor may find beads from a squaw's necklace or obsidian arrowheads. Look for Gossip Rock, a huge limestone boulder



Remains of the salt tram.

where the women of the tribe would sit grinding mesquite beans and pinyon nuts.

Other ancient sites in the valley are marked by piles of obsidian chips. At such places partially finished arrowheads are frequently found. While most of these Indians lived in flimsy structures made of brush, rock hogans were occasionally made. One remote site contains two such dwellings, one collapsed and the other in almost perfect condition. A pinyon branch used to support the roof could undoubtedly be used to date the structure.

History books first mention the salt deposits of the Saline Valley as early as 1864. Miners rushed into the valley in the 1880's - but it was gold they were seeking, not salt. When they didn't find the precious metal, they moved on. It was 1903 before anyone attempted to profit from the vast salt deposits. Although there was a railroad in the Owens Valley only 12 miles away, 10,668-foot New York Butte was in the way.

The Saline Valley Salt Company found it too expensive to haul the salt out by wagon so they engaged the Trenton Iron Company to build a 13½ mile tramline over the Inyo Mountains. Construction started on September 1, 1911, and the first bucket loads of salt reached the Owen Lake railhead on July 2, 1913. For seven years an endless chain of buckets transported "The World's Purest Salt" at a rate of 20 tone-per-hour.

Mining was rather simple. Natural springs fed water onto the 1,500-acre salt flat during the winter months. The brine solution was impounded in shallow ponds behind a series of dikes. The summer sun would evaporate the water leaving a residue of salt crystals. This harvest was gathered continuously until 1918, and then intermittently until 1930. Today, you can still find a network of dikes and various ruins around the salt lake. Even the tramline with sections is still largely intact.

Just north of the salt lake an unmarked, but frequently used road, starts north and somewhat east to a series of warm springs. It is a dusty eight miles to Lower Warm Springs, but a side trip well worth the effort. Here mineral water bubbles out of the ground at a delightful 112 degrees. Over the years visitors have lined the main pool with concrete creating a primitive, but excellent spa. Mesquite trees surround the springs offering many fine shaded and secluded campsites. Practically anytime between mid-October and mid-April is a good time to camp here. Except on weekends, you are likely to have the springs to yourself.

While most prudent drivers will not take a standard passenger car beyond Lower Warm Spring, the road does go on. Those with pickups can continue up the wash another mile to Palm Spring, so named for a single palm which was planted here. The route beyond here becomes increasingly difficult and is recommended only for dune buggies or four-wheel drive vehicles.

Two and a quarter miles above Palm Spring is Upper Warm Spring. The campsites here are usually uncrowded. The rough jeep trail continues northward through very desolate country. Eventually, with some difficulty, you can cross a pass and come out at the sand dunes in Eureka Valley. This route is definitely not recommended for the inexperienced or a party in just one vehicle.

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There are four ways you can drive into the Saline Valley, but only two are passable to the family passenger car. Relatively good graded roads enter the valley from the north and south.

From the north take State 168 east from Big Pine. This road forks at 2.4 miles and again after another 14 miles. Keep right both times. The road is well marked with signs. This route passes through Marble Canyon with its picturesque old cabins and headframes. The canyon was once busy with miners working the dry gravel for its placer gold. The road briefly enters the pinyon forest as it reaches a high point of 7,300 feet.

As the road descends Whippoorwill Canyon there are a few shady spots where snow may linger during the winter months. Generally, however, this is an all year road. The road gradually drops to the valley floor passing a number of abandoned talc mines to the right. An area of small dunes is passed on the left and finally you will reach the salt lake. By this route it is 58 miles from the salt works back to Big Pine, the nearest point of civilization. Of that distance, 44 miles are over dirt roads.

The southern road into the valley leaves State 190 at a point 31 miles east of Olancha (4 miles east of the Darwin turnoff). Again, the road is well marked with prominent signs. The road, paved at first, heads north through Joshua Tree forests of Santa Rosa and Lee Flats. As the road climbs to a highpoint of 6,200 feet, there are some scenic views south into Panamint Valley.

At the head of Grapevine Canyon the road forks. Take the left fork going down the canyon. Wild burros are often seen grazing on the hillsides in this area. They are undoubtedly attracted by several springs found in the region. Once out of the canyon and on the alluvial fan, it is still some 16 miles to the salt works. In the spring, if moisture conditions have been just right, this area has been known to put on a spectacular wildflower display. By the southern route it is 38 miles from the salt works to Highway 190.

For those with four-wheel drive vehicles, there are more challenging ways to enter the Saline Valley. One such jeep trail is the previously mentioned route from the Eureka Valley sand dunes, via Marble Bath and Warm Springs. Another trail, strictly for four-wheel drive vehicles, starts westward from the southern end of the Racetrack Valley. The turnoff is at the bottom of the hill, just before reaching the Lippencott Lead Mine. When winter snows block the road over Hunter Mountain, this is the only through passage from the Death Valley area directly to the Saline Valley. The route is rough and steep, but relatively short.

No matter what route you choose, you should carry sufficient food, water and extra gasoline. There are no facilities of any kind in or near the Saline Valley. Summer temperatures frequently reach 120 degrees on the valley floor, so the area should be avoided between June and August. Even in this age when men are walking on the moon, the desert can be as hard and as cruel as it was in the days of '49.

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the salt mines'

A more successful salt-mining operation took place in the appropriately named Saline Valley. Workers loaded pure salt from the valley floor into an impressive tramway that whisked it over the mountains to the banks of the Owens Lake near Keeler. The Saline Valley Salt Company's tramway was an impressive engineering feat which kept the salt mine operating until 1933.

Today the huge tram towers and stations still stand as a reminder of the heyday of Inyo County's salt mining era.

The Saline Valley salt works and tramway

Saline Valley, a deep basin east of the Inyo Range, contains a large deposit of salt that is one of the purest known in the world. The deposits were first described in 1864, but were not exploited on a large scale until the early 1900s due to the difficulty and cost of transporting the salt to market from this remote area. Prior to the 1900s, salt from Saline Valley was traded by the Shoshone and Owens Valley Paiute.

Various proposals for transporting salt from Saline Valley were considered as early as 1882, such as the construction of a railroad into the valley from the south or the piping of salt over the Inyo Range in a brine solution. The former plan was determined to be prohibitively expensive due to extremely steep grades, and the latter was rejected because it did not provide for a way to transport supplies back to Saline Valley. Ultimately, the first salt exports were hauled by wagon and team over a rough 65-mile road to Lone Pine.

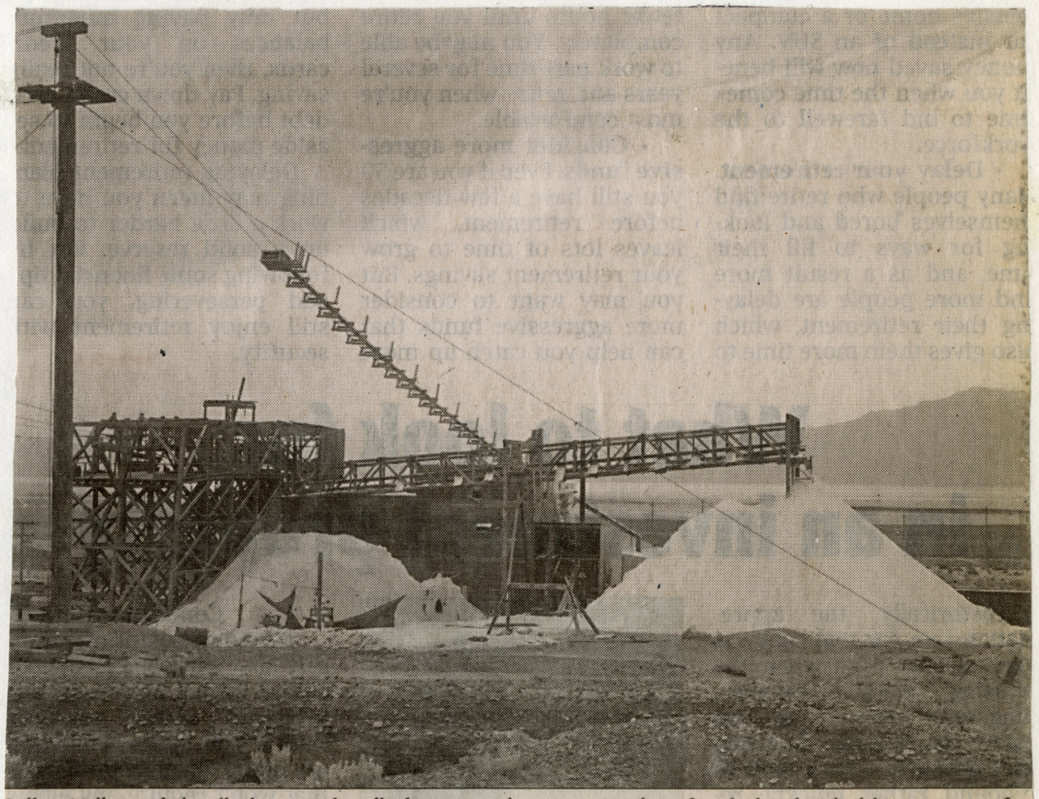
In 1911, the Saline Valley Salt Company decided to build an aerial electric tramway that would rise 7,600 feet to the crest of the Inyo Range from the floor of Saline Valley, and then descend 5,100 feet to the narrow gauge railroad terminal at Tramway near Keeler, all within a distance of 13.5 miles.

To build the tramway, 1.3 million board feet of lumber, 650 tons of metal bolts and braces, 265,000 feet (more than 50 miles) of cable, 5,000 large sacks of cement, and other materials and machinery were shipped on the Southern Pacific railroad to Tramway and then transported by pack trains and other means to construction sites along the tram's route. At the time the tram was constructed, it was the largest and most elaborate of any in the world.

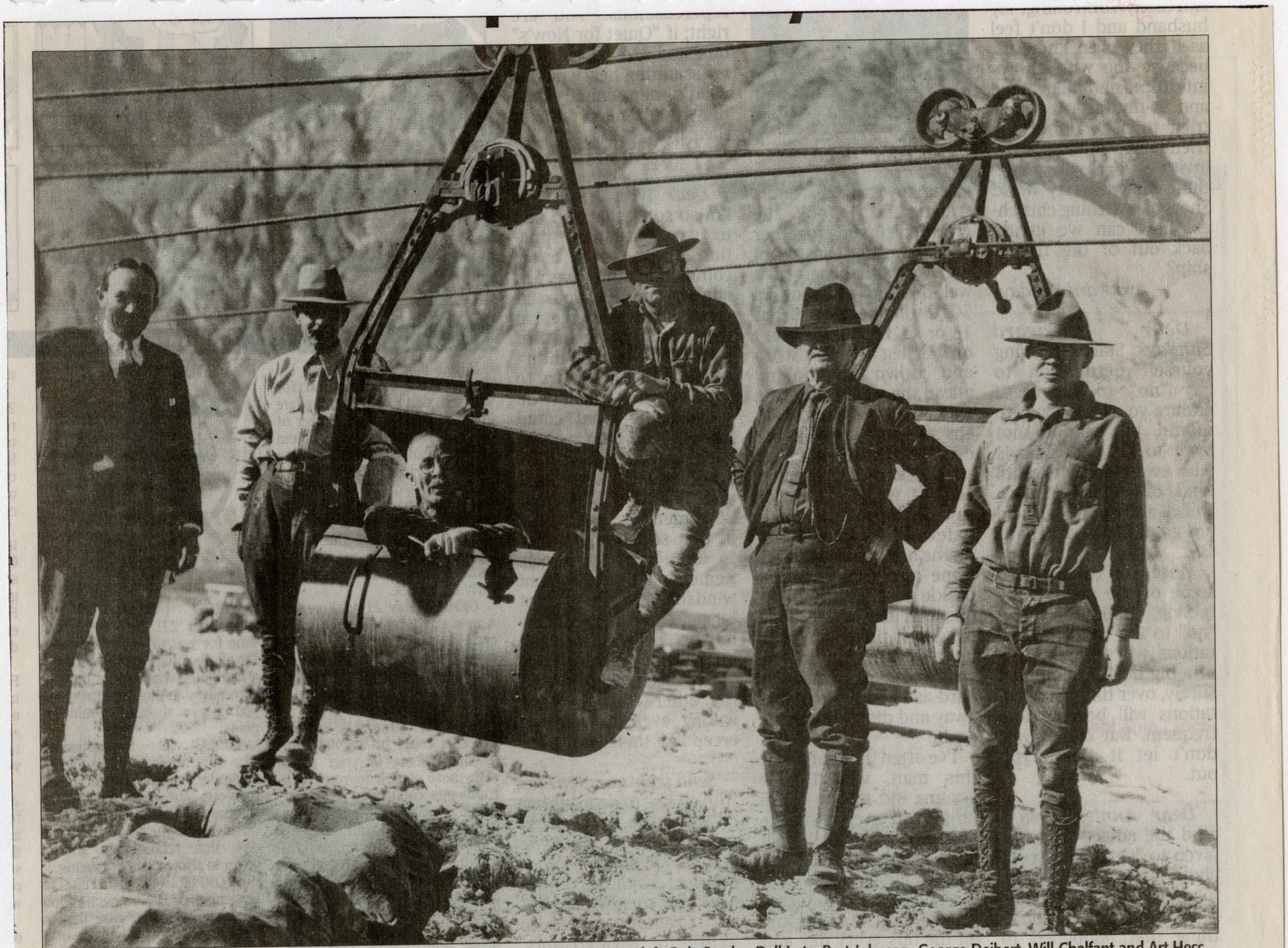
The first load of salt carried by the tram was delivered at Tramway on July 2, 1913. By February 1914, the Saline Valley Salt Company was shipping 9 to 15 railroad carloads of processed salt per week. But it couldn't turn a profit, so it was taken over by U.S. Steel, the company that built the tram. Between 1924 and 1926, a road to Saline Valley via San Lucas Canyon was constructed. The County of Inyo contributed $20,000 toward the cost of building the road, but the use of trucks to transport salt also proved unprofitable.

In 1928, the Sierra Salt Company refurbished the tram after purchasing it from U.S. Steel, and was soon transporting salt to Tramway at a rate of 60 to 100 tons per day. The Sierra Salt Company also experienced financial difficulties and ceased operations in 1933. Although Saline Valley salt is exceptionally pure, its monetary value was never high enough to offset the cost of transporting it to market.

Salt shipments from the Saline Valley salt mines that were transported from Death Valley to Lone Pine left the Owens Valley by truck.



Saline Valley salt is piled up at the discharge station near Keeler after being hauled by tramway for 13.5 miles.



The Salt Tram that took salt from Saline Valley to Swansea and operated over the mountains from 1913 to 1933. In this case, Bert Johnson sits in the bucket instead of salt; from left, Bob Crosby, Dell Lutz, Bert Johnson, George Deibert, Will Chalfant and Art Hess.

Photos courtesy Courtesy of Laws Museum

Reflections in Tinemaha Reservoir

HOWARD WALKER

Safety Tips

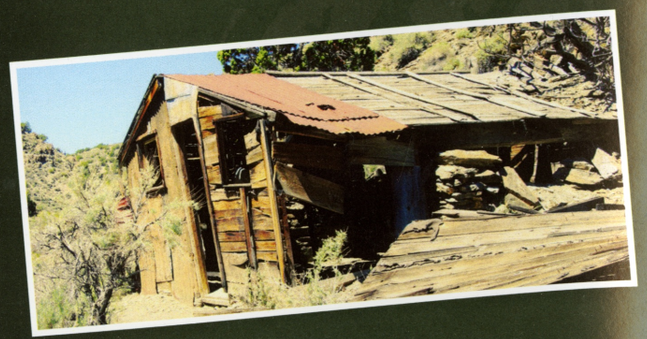
Plan Your Trip:
Tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Bring maps and appropriate equipment into back country. Check weather forecasts in advance, and prepare accordingly.

Dress Properly:
Wear layered clothing to slow dehydration and minimize exposure. Pack good hiking shoes, loose fitted natural fiber clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. During winter, or even in summer at higher elevations, bring extra clothing including rain or snow jacket, and gloves to be protected in extreme weather in the event your vehicle becomes disabled.

Carry Plenty of Water:
There are many areas on this map with limited or no dependable natural water sources—especially in the White Mountains, Inyo Mountains, and lower elevations of Owens Valley. Carry a minimum of a gallon of water per person, per day. Do not ration water; it will only do you good if you drink it.

Mine Shafts:
For your safety, do not enter mine shafts. Stay Out and Stay Alive!

Vehicles:
Keep your vehicle maintained. Pack extra water, food, a shovel, tools, a tow strap, reflectors, and blanket or sleeping bag. Check road conditions and beware of flash floods. If you are stranded, stay with your vehicle as it is much easier to spot a vehicle than a person on foot.



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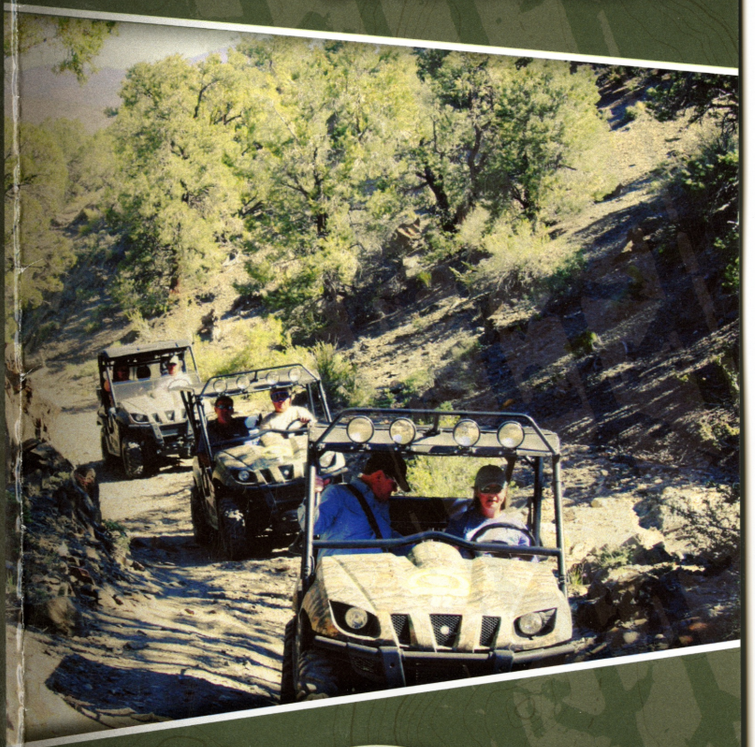
For Information Regarding Accommodations in the Eastern Sierra contact:

Bishop Chamber of Commerce
www.bishopvisitor.com
(760) 873-8405

California OHV Regulations
http://ohv.parks.ca.gov

In Case of Emergency Call
The Inyo County Sheriff's Office
911 or (760) 873-7887

PAPOOSE & HARKLESS
OHV AREA



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OHV FUNDS AT WORK

ADVOCATES FOR ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

ESAT

Papoose & Harkless Flats

Located a little east of Big Pine, Papoose and Harkless Flats offer quite a varied expanse of terrain. Enjoy the very scenic views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains as well as steep roads, narrow canyons and interesting mines.

CAMPING

USFS: The USFS offers developed, family, group, undeveloped, and remote camping opportunities. For specific information on camping in USFS areas, contact the nearest office or visit the Inyo National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/inyo (navigate to Recreation, then Camping). Make campground reservations using the national reservation service at (877) 444-6777 *recreation.gov*

Except where prohibited, backcountry camping is allowed one mile away from a developed area, paved road, or "day use only" area. Camp only in previously disturbed areas and park your vehicle close to the roadway to minimize impact. Backcountry campsites must be more than 100 yards from any water source to protect these fragile areas for wildlife use.

BLM Bishop Resource Area: On undeveloped BLM lands where camping is not prohibited, you may camp up to 14 days per calendar year. In BLM campgrounds you may camp in any one campground up to 14 days per calendar year and up to 28 days per calendar year in any two or more BLM campgrounds.

- Public nudity is prohibited at all developed sites and areas, and in all OHV open areas.
- It is prohibited to use as firewood, or have in your possession, any firewood materials containing nails, screws, or other metal hardware, including, but not limited to, wood pallets and/or construction debris.
- It is prohibited to place into the ground any non-flexible objects, such as, but not limited to, metal or wood stakes, poles, or pipes, with the exception of small tent or awning stakes, at all developed sites and areas and all OHV open areas.
- You must keep your sites free of trash and litter during the period of occupancy. BLM Rangers and Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers enforce all applicable laws. Help keep this area open for off-road recreation by obeying the law. County Campgrounds and other Public Camping: There are a wide variety of campgrounds in Inyo and Mono Counties provided by public and private entities. More information at: *inyocountycamping.com* or *monocounty.org*

CAMPFIRES

California Campfire Permits are required on all Inyo National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands for the use of a campfire, propane stove, lantern, barbecue or any open flame unless you are in a developed campsite or picnic area.

Permits are available free-of-charge at offices of the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and are valid for one year. Regulations governing campfires are specific to each National Forest and can change with weather conditions and the seasons. To protect yourself and the forest, before each visit, check with the Forest Service for current campfire restrictions.

Open fires – including stoves – may be banned completely during periods of high fire danger. Outside of existing campfire rings, please use a metal fire pan. Firewood collection is restricted to down and dead materials. Always "Drown, Stir and Feel" to ensure any fire is completely out. Contact local agency offices for further fire information.

HUNTING AND SHOOTING

Rules & Regulations

If you are going to shoot a weapon, make sure it is in a legal area and it is safe. Clean up after yourself.

Most public lands managed by the BLM and USFS are open to hunting, with some exceptions. All state laws regarding hunting, including the possession of valid state hunting license, are in effect on these lands. Hunting opportunities exist for migratory birds, upland game, fur bearing mammals and big game, except where prohibited by State or local laws or posted otherwise. Questions regarding these opportunities should be directed to the local land management field office. For information on hunting or fishing regulations, call the California Department of Fish and Game at (916) 445-0411 or visit: *dfg.ca.gov*

On Federal Lands (BLM and USFS): The shooting or discharge of firearms is generally permitted on USFS and BLM-managed lands unless posted otherwise, as long as such activity is permitted by state and local laws. Shooters are prohibited from destroying any natural features, including rock formations and plants. All targets and cartridges must be cleaned up and removed from public lands. A firearm may not be discharged within 150 yards of any developed area.

California State Parks (CSP): Hunting or the possession of loaded firearms is prohibited within most units of the State Park system.

VEHICLE TRAVEL

Vehicle Recreation Use Areas:

1. Open Areas - Motorized cross-country travel is allowed within designated Open Area boundaries only. On Federal lands on this map, this applies only to the Poleta Open Area east of Bishop.
2. Limited Use Areas (all areas of this map except Poleta Open Area) - also known as a Designated Route system. All vehicle travel is allowed only on existing and designated routes. No cross-county travel is allowed.

It is not legal for non-licensed vehicles to cross highways or any paved road exceeding two lanes in width. On Highway 395 between Mammoth Lakes and June Lake there are two tunnels which allow legal passage under the highway. The northern tunnel is located at K-2, and connects the Crater Loop and other Green Sticker routes to fuel and supplies at June Lake Junction. The southern tunnel at I-3 connects the Mammoth area to the Lookout Loop.

- Stay on legal routes. All areas on this map except Poleta Open Area are restricted to designated trails only.
- On USFS land, legally designated roads and trails are shown on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Obtain a copy of the Inyo National Forest MVUM by contacting one of the local Forest Service offices listed on this map, or going to the Forest's website.
- Paved roads, and some graded dirt roads, are only open to street legal vehicles. You may drive across these roads, but cannot ride on or alongside them.
- Wilderness areas are closed to all motor vehicles.
- Adequate spark arresters and mufflers are required. Rangers and Forest Officers can test for compliance.
- State law requires ATV and ROV riders to wear a helmet. Please also wear boots, gloves, and eye protection.
- Passengers are not allowed on ATVs, except as designed by manufacturer, and are not allowed on a portion of an ORV or trailer that is not intended for the transportation of passengers.
- **Check With Your Local Offices For Conditions And Restrictions Before You Ride!**

For more information on OHV laws, including requirements regarding age, helmets, seat belts and other safety requirements, visit the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division's website at: *ohv.parks.ca.gov*

Off Highway Vehicle Rules & Regulations

Due to diverse topography, plants, soils, and land ownership in California, OHV regulations vary from area to area. Check with the appropriate land management agency before your visit.

All vehicles must have one of the following: valid street-legal registration, current OHV sticker (either a green sticker or seasonal red sticker), or a California non-resident sticker.

Green Sticker / Red Sticker: When riding in areas included on this map, a Green Sticker or a Red Sticker is required if your vehicle is not street legally licensed. Stickers are available from your local DMV office. For more info call California Parks at (916) 324-4442 or visit: *ohv.parks.ca.gov*

Out of State Off-Highway Vehicles: If your OHV is licensed or permitted in another state, nothing more is required in California. Otherwise, an Out of State Permit is required to ride it in California. Visit *ohv.parks.ca.gov* and click "Non-resident OHV Use Permits" for a vendor list.

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Deep Springs Lake

Klondike Lake

168

Reynolds Rd

Glacier Lodge Rd

Lower Glacier Rd

School St

Bartell Rd

Steward Ln

Steward Ranch Rd

R-2

R-1

Walcoba Saline Rd

Fish Springs Rd

Birch Creek Rd

Tinemaha Reservoir

Fuller Rd

Elna Rd

395

Taboose Creek Rd

Aberdeen Station Rd

Goodale Rd

Tinemaha Rd

N Colorado Rd

Division Creek Rd

Coliseum Rd

N Oak Creek Rd

Shabbell Ln

S Oak Creek Rd

Dump Rd

Mazourka Canyon Rd

Foothill

Owens Valley Rd

Legend

- R-1
- R-2
- R-3
- R-1 Return to Parking
- Road to Fishing
- Roads open to all vehicles
- Trails open to all vehicles
- Trails open to motorcycles
- Easiest
- More Difficult
- Most Difficult
- Parking Area
- BLM Land
- Forest Service Land
- BLM Open Area
- Forest Service Open Area
- Perennial Streams
- Canals, ditches & intermittent streams
- Trout Fishing
- Warm-water Fishing

Bob Larson 2016

Above Owens Valley

Inyo Co., CA.

6-14-16

Jeff looking for Bob's rock

Inyo Nat'l Forest

1

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Old House FOUNDATION 2013
AT ~~Butler~~ RANCH
Butler

Inyo MTNS west of Big Pine

Inyo Mountains local history binder content list

Description:

Compiled by Bob Larson (1934-2024).

Collection of magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and other printed ephemera related to Inyo Mountains, located in Inyo County, California.

Item compiled by/from the collection of Robert Wood "Bob" Larson (1934-2024). Bob Larson was a teacher at Salinas High School in Salinas, California for many years. Bob inherited his aunt Enid A. Larson's home in Big Pine, Inyo County, California in 1991. He and his wife Iva "Ivy" Larson (1932-2006) regularly visited Inyo County; following Ivy's death, Bob permanently relocated to Big Pine in 2013. Bob continued his aunt Enid's collection related to Owens Valley History, and he accumulated articles and books on the natural and human history of Inyo County.

From the Inyo County Free Library Local History Room Collection. Scanned by the Inyo County Free Library in June 2026.

Binder contents (in order of appearance):

Binder cover: Hand drawn cover: "Inyo Mtns."

Document: "Inyo Mountains – INYO National Forest" informational sheet by White Mountain Ranger Station, US Forest Service. Includes map and camping rules for the Inyo Mountains area. No date.

Unknown periodical clipping: "Route 8: Mazourka Canyon." Provides driving directions from Independence to Mazourka Canyon area, as well as history of the region (including Bend City and San Carlos). Includes map.

Document: "Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Field Office: Inyo Mountains Wilderness" informational sheet. Includes map.

Document: "Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Field Office: Beveridge Canyon Trail Information – Inyo Mountains Wilderness" informational sheet. Provides information about Beveridge Canyon / Beveridge Mining District, Burgess Mine Trail, French Spring Trail, Lonesome Miner Trail, Snowflake Mine Trail.

Document: "Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Field Office: Lonesome Miner Trail – Inyo Mountains Wilderness – Information and Background." Provides information on Lonesome Miner Trail, McElvoy Canyon, Pat Keyes Canyon/Pay Keyes Trail, Hunter Canyon Trailhead, Keynot Mine.

Periodical clipping: *The Survivor*, Fall 2009, p. 9-13. “Lonesome Miner Trail: Pat Keyes Trailhead to the mouth of Hunter Canyon Inyo Mountains APRIL – MAY 2009” by Lawrence Wilson. Memoir and details of hiking Hunter Canyon Trail.

Periodical clipping: *The Album: Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono*, Apr 1992, p. 33-39. “Beveridge: A Three-Mystery Ghost Town” by Thomas S. Budlong. Article provides history and modern photos of the ghost town of Beveridge in the Inyo Mountains

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 23 Mar 1997, p. L11. “Hiking: Inyo Mountains – Lonesome Miner Trail – Lonesome Route of the Prospectors” by John McKinney.

Document: Photocopy of “Inyo Mountain Wilderness, Inyo National Forest Portion – Waucoba Mountain NW Quadrangle” by United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, California Region.”

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Winter 2011-2012 [Vol. IX, Issue II], p. 6. “Exploration: Conglomerate Mesa” by Wano Urbonas.

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Vol VIII, Issue II [“2011”], p. 13. “Exploration: Joshua Flat, Piper Mountains Wilderness” by Todd Vogel. Page includes handwritten note: “Joshua Flat (6-6-20)” signed “Joan + Jeff.”

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Vol. XIII, Issue I [“Spring 2015”], p. 8. “Get Out: Pat Keyes Trail – Inyo National Forest and Bureau of Land Management – Inyo Mountains Wilderness.” Description of trail, including map.

Unknown periodical clipping: Hand dated 2013. “Inyo Mountains Wilderness” and “Piper Mountain Wilderness.” Includes “The Story of Winnedumah.”

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Vol. XIV, Issue I, p. 10. “Exploration: Get out! Exploring the White-Inyo Bridge.” Inyo-White Mountain Range.

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Vol. X, Issue II, p. 6. “Exploration: My Bucket Overfloweth – Hiking Last Chance Canyon” by Todd Vogel.

Images: Page of three original (?) color photographs, captioned “2012”, “Landing Strip”, “Airplane Mesa,” “Wind Sock.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 3 Nov 2012, p. A8. “An Inyo Mountain Adventure: Hike turns up chipping field, Seep Hole and Bristlecones” by Dennis Vance. Mentions Seep Hole Springs, Mazourka Peak, Bonanza Gulch.

Images: Page of four original color photographs, captioned “2010”, “Harkless Flat.”

Images: Page of four original color photographs, no captions, apparently Inyo Mountains area. One photo shows a wooden sign with “J+R Mining” with a series of dates in the 2000s etched below.

Images: Page of four original color photographs, captioned “Inyo Mtns 2015.” Bottom right photo appears to show Bob Larson.

Images: Page of four original color photographs, captioned “Butler Ranch Area.” Top right photo appears to show Bob Larson.

Images: Page of four original color photographs, captioned “Little Pipe Creek,” “Inyo Mtns.” Two right photos appear to show Bob Larson.

Images: Page of three original color photographs, captioned “Birch poles used to harvest Pinyon cones”, “2015”, “Garden Rock”, “Upper Pinyon House.”

Document: “Butler Ranch Loop – Self-Guided 4WD / High Clearance” map by Big Pine Chamber of Commerce. “Map by Win Carter, Betty Carter, Dwayne Rossi.” Back of document shows Tinnemaha Lava Flow 4WD Loop map.

Periodical clipping: *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* [date unknown]. Book review of *The Archaeology of Pinyon House, Two Eagles, and Crater Middens: Three Residential Sites in Owens Valley, Eastern California* by Robert L. Bettinger (1989), reviewed by Robert M. Yohe II.

Periodical clipping/website printout: *Journal of California Anthropology*, 1975, “Late Prehistoric and Historic Structures in Owens Valley, Eastern California” by Robert L. Bettinger.

Image: Original color photo captioned “Photo by Eileen Burger – 270-250 years old – Pinyon House – 2011 – Bob Larson.” Photo of Bob Larson standing next to wikiup/Paiute Pinyon house.

Images: Four original color photographs captioned “Bob Larson on drag trail above car”, “2011,” “270-350 yrs old – Pinyon House”, “Sierra View”, “Old Time Camp”. Photos from sites in the Inyo Mountains.

Images: Four original color photographs captioned “Cave Rock”, “2011”, “Cave Rock”, “Lower Trail Entrance.”

Document: Color topographic map of unknown origin and date. Hand captioned “Guzzler Locations” displaying locations of desert water caches for wild animals.

Images: Four original color photographs captioned “Guzzler Types.”

Unknown newspaper clipping: [*Inyo Register*?] “Land Issues Debated. The Harkless flat area in the White Mountains (seen here) has been mentioned as part of the Wilderness proposals…”

Document: “SUV Tour 1 – Swansea Grade to Cerro Gordo – 4WD MANDATORY” by Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 28 Mar 2020, p. 15. “One crazy loop hike” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking Juniper BM Peak.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 8 Oct 2020, p. 2. “Throwback Thursday: Eureka Valley.” “At the Eureka Valley Sulfur Mine, c. 1934. County Superintendent Charles Partridge’s Buick is in front of the headquarters…”

Periodical clipping: *The Survivor*, Winter 1994. “Desert Mysteries: The Beekeeper of McElvoy Canyon” by Wendell Moyer. Article on Marion Howard (1909-2002), a reclusive man who maintained a beekeeping operation tucked in a hard-to-reach section of the Inyo Mountains at McElvoy Canyon for many years.

Unknown periodical clipping: “The Legend of Winnedumah” credited to Dan Rose c. 1927. Retelling of a version of the Winnedumah Legend from Paiute-Shoshone culture.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Mar 2010, p. B6. “Guest speakers bring historic salt to museum’s annual meeting – Intrepid brothers will talk about history of Inyo’s famous Salt Tram” by Jon Klusmire. Article on brothers Tim Waag and Brian Waag and their research of the Saline Valley Salt Tram.

Document: Photocopy of *Inyo Anno Domini 1912*, p. 27-28. “The Purest Salt in the World – A Big Enterprise with Headquarters at Bishop.” Article on Saline Valley Salt Tram operation, which was operating at the time of publication.

Periodical clipping: Photocopy of *The Album: Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono*, Oct 1992, p. 28-32. “Ghost of a Skeleton Revisited” by Willma Willis Gore. Article on the Saline Valley Salt Tram and Saline Valley Salt Corporation operation transporting salt from Saline Valley to the Owens Valley.

Periodical clipping: Photocopy of *Desert Magazine*, Aug 1959, p. 19-21. “We Hiked the Inyo Bucket Brigade – The Saline Valley tramway on California’s Mojave Desert was a bolt mining venture—13 miles of steel cable over the rugged Inyo Mountains” by Robert O. Greenawalt. Includes diagram / map of the Saline Valley Salt Company Tram line over the Inyo Mountains from Saline Valley to Swansea.

Periodical clipping: Photocopy of *Historic Legends of Inyo County 1976*, p. 40-42. “The Saline Valley.” Includes information on indigenous residents of Saline Valley and SV salt tram.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 28 Feb 2015, p. A12. “Where ‘working in the salt mines’ was a good thing.” Article on Saline Valley Salt Company and salt tram.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 20 Oct 2018, p. A15. “Roads and cattle kept folks busy in 1926.” [Text missing from clipping]. Caption: “The Salt Tram that took salt from Saline Valley to Swansea…”

Unknown clipping/document: “Reflections in Tinemaha Reservoir.” Hand credited to Howard Walker.

Brochure/pamphlet: “Papoose & Harkless OHV Area”, Eastern Sierra ATV Adventure Trails, Bishop Chamber of Commerce. Includes map.

Image: Original photo hand captioned “Bob Larson – 2016 – Above Owens Valley – Inyo Co., CA.”

Image: Original photo hand captioned “6-14-16 – Jeff Looking for Bob’s Rock – Inyo Nat’l Forest.”

Image: Original photo hand captioned “Old House [Foundation] at Butler Ranch – 2013 – Inyo Mtns west of Big Pine.”

[Revised 18 Jun 2026]